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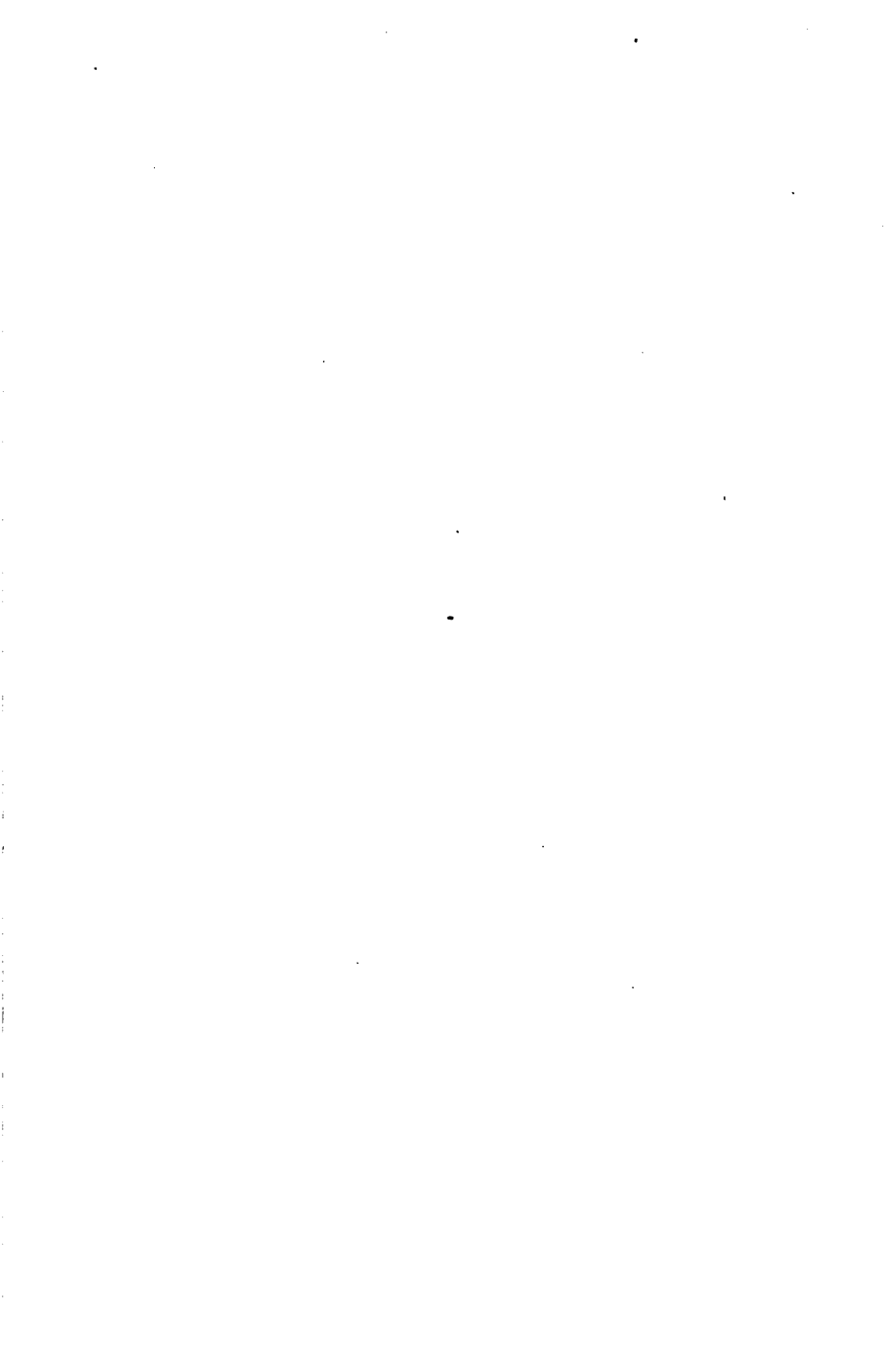
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LIFE'S LESSER MOODS

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Life's Lesser Moods

BY

C. LEWIS HIND

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AMONG PICTURES,' ETC.



ADAM & CHARLES BLACK

1904

GENERAL

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Life's Lesser Moods

The Part and the Whole.

ON the downs, in the composure of the autumn day, life had seemed comprehensible, if not exhilarating ; but here, in the wood, all was dark and difficult. There was no path, and no horizon. The trees, in their mantle of moisture, with last year's leaves soddening about their roots, shut out all wholesome sights. It was as if we had dropped down into a dungeon.

'All discomfort is temporary,' said my companion. 'A fly crawling over an orange and meeting a pin-point of mildew does not sit down and sob—"All life is mildew." No ! It crawls away to a wholesome place. It is brooding on the part that's confusing and depressing. Error

Life's Lesser Moods

comes through seeing in part. It takes a big man to see the whole, and, if he be articulate, he gives the world what the world calls truth. And truth persists through the centuries and all changes. When now and then in our lives we little men say 'That is truth,' with an air of conviction that is inwardly half amazement and half joy, it means that we have escaped temporarily from the part which is individuality and have seen the whole. Truth——'

Here I broke in. My contribution to the discussion was modest. It consisted of one word. 'Look!' In the distance, through the crowding tree-trunks, as if a door had been suddenly opened beyond our dungeon, shone the clear light of the autumn day. We pushed towards the gleam in silence, forced our way through the fringe of undergrowth, and came out upon the ridge. The world lay out-stretched beneath.

The ridge upon which we stood went down steeply to the white ribbon of road that skirted the huddle of hills and felt for

The Part and the Whole

its way through pastures, linking village to village until it disappeared behind a distant crest. We threw ourselves down and looked out upon the world. Close to where we sat the turf had been wantonly cut away, showing the white chalk-bed. This mutilation of the green hillside extended downwards to the road. It was as if a huge waste of white paper had been pasted on the hillside. I kicked one of the pieces of chalk : it rolled over the brow of the hill and disappeared. I wondered who had done this vandal work, and why. There seemed no purpose in it. The rough bed of disclosed chalk was useless—an eyesore. It was too steep for a road, too shallow for a quarry. How explain it except as the night-work of some wretch who had stolen the turf to carpet his garden? It annoyed me. Then the sun came out, and fell so dazzlingly on the chalk that we shaded our eyes, rose, scrambled down, and struck up and across the country to the distant hill.

I did not turn again until we reached that hill. When I did turn, and looked



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over the path we had followed, I started. For suddenly, in quite a simple way, I saw the whole. What, where we had rested, had seemed a meaningless scratching away of the turf was one of the arms of a gigantic cross that lay out—symmetrical, dazzling—on the hillside. It was a real cross, cut there in the turf long ago by an Oxford College, and repaired every seven years. There it shone, white and large, the paramount appeal of the landscape: the turf around was a background, the trees above were dark sentinels.

My companion continued his remarks. 'Pagan and Christian alike have seen the whole. Confucius saw it, and Paul saw it. A greater than Paul saw it always; Paul saw it often. He saw it when he said: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child——" Maeterlinck says somewhere that as we ourselves grow better we meet better men. Maeterlinck sees the whole oftener than most modern men.'

Faith.

I ENTERED the wood walking hurriedly, as it was near sunset, and the village at which I proposed to sleep was a mile on the other side. Halfway through the wood I came upon a clearing, and in the middle of this reclaimed space stood the woodcutters' cottages. They were surrounded by a hedge: all about were stacks of wood, and under a roof of withered branches were chairs, some finished, some still in the making. The day's work being over, the men sat in the porches of their cottages; but one was digging in his garden. Him I knew: had known aforetime well, but under very different conditions. 'What, you?' I cried. He smiled, and came towards me.

'Yes: this is my second year with nature,' he explained presently. 'I cut wood, design chairs, dig, and paint. Read? No. I've done with books for the present. A new view of education came to me, and I am now putting it to the test. I run the

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risk of seeming a horrid prig ; but may I say that wisdom, not knowledge, is my goal? I am quite content, for the present, to let the world go by, while I reflect, dig, design chairs for the peasants here, and paint.'

'You still paint, then?'

'Yes ; but not in the old way. I paint dreams, not actualities. You see, out here my eyes are always absorbing beautiful effects—the flight and poise of birds, the bark of beech trees against the sky, the shimmer of grasses bending before the wind, the folds of great uplands,—all the changes of nature in sun and shadow. This morning, for example, I was awakened by a thrush singing in that tree. I threw open the window and leaned out. The world was very new, very grey, very potential, very silent. I shall paint that thrush singing in a still world.'

'How can you paint a thrush's song?'

'It is difficult to explain ; but you see all my pictures have an intention, an ordained background in which is set a certain young figure. When I paint a

Faith

little work called "The Lamb Bleats for Her," or "The Poet Speaks for Her," or "The Nightingale Sings for Her," or "The Shepherd Hears for Her," each of the pictures expresses her awakening joy in the beauty of the world, her cries of gratitude to God. That's my mission now. The morning stars, you know, shouted for joy. My pictures are a small tribute ; but they are the best I can offer.'

'Then your pictures have a meaning for those who are able to understand ?'

His eyes said Yes. 'You know those wonderful old pictures in German galleries by nameless painters who are known as "The Master of the Life of Mary," "The Master of the Death of Mary," and so on. Well, scenes from her bright and happy youth are the foundation of all my pictures, not interiors, but in the open air, set in this beautiful country, and in each picture she discovers for the first time some new loveliness in the world—lambs, sunsets, morning skies, spring blossoms, the songs of birds, the young green of trees, the Gothic aisles of woods, purple hills, the

Life's Lesser Moods

sunlight dappling the turf in orchards. I have proof, indubitable proof, that these little tributes of mine are acceptable.'

'How?'

'I sell these pictures to a dealer in London for five pounds each. We have a contract. He takes all I paint. That is my entire income, small but regular. Last week I sold two, for which he gave me a ten-pound note. Coming home, I had not time to take a ticket. It was a corridor train. I was standing in the corridor by an open window when the guard asked me for my ticket. I handed him the note. A gust of wind whirled it through the open window. I was in despair, without a farthing in the world; I could not earn more for months, for I am a slow worker. The passengers sympathised, talked about stopping the train, and such nonsense. Then the door leading from the first-class compartment opened, and a girl, slight and beautiful, came towards us, paused, and placed in my hand a ten-pound note. I was too dumb-founded to thank her. She disappeared.

Faith

Later I searched for her to explain and apologise for my boorishness. Of course, I could not find her !'

‘Why not?’

‘Don’t you understand? She was Our Lady.’

Poets.

THE end of the lecture was near. My interest reawakened. 'Some,' said the lecturer, 'are so busy seeking truth that they have no time to make money ; others are so possessed by the strangeness of the seen, and the reality of the unseen, that they have no time to seek truth.' There he paused, and came forward a few steps, as if the lecture was ended. The rest was conversational. 'I have known three poets in my life,' he said, 'and this, or something like it, was their way.

'One, a grey-haired poet, I saw but once. It was the month of June in the down country where he lived. The hour was just before sunset, and I, passing by his house, saw him come out of his study, and stand for a moment erect, still as a statue, on the hillside. He gazed over the quiet land to the setting sun. Then he bared his head, and his lips moved. So he stood till the sun disappeared. I passed on, to see, for ever afterwards when I read his poetry,

Poets

his figure as I saw it on that June evening, bareheaded before the setting sun, and his lips moving.

‘The second is associated with the streets of London. Ill-dressed, looking ill, always with books tucked under his arms, he hurries along the pavement, jostled by the passers-by, derided by the vulgar, going I know not whither, but always hastening on between a quick walk and a run, as if in pursuit of the visions that, the maddening world disregarded, he sees above the house-tops. His chin is always uplifted ; his eyes are always fixed on the above and the beyond—there on the beckoning sky, with intermittent gleams of light, that hovers above the buildings. His lips also move—quickly.

‘With the third I had some former acquaintance, which ripened through a night we spent together in a Northern town where he was living at the time. I had gone there to attend a meeting of a literary society that was endeavouring to persuade the world to accept an ancient author about whom the world was quite indifferent.

Life's Lesser Moods

This poet and I walked away together from the meeting, and he spoke of a yellow, dog's-eared, leather-bound book which he had bought that day for ninepence. He talked of it with enthusiasm, and his voice rose and fell as he quoted. "Come to my rooms," he said, "and let me read some of it to you." O the neighbourhood where he lived ! We went through dark, dank railway arches, and stopped before an aged house in a narrow street, where even at that hour children were scuffling in the gutter. The stairs of the house were uncarpeted, the walls were moist ; but the room where he lived was rare in its simplicity. There were books, a few curious prints, one beautiful rug on the bare boards, and on the table a litter of manuscripts. He lighted a candle and read, and the thoughts of that ancient author became living words. Colour shone out in that little room ; music filled it. Through the mouth of the living poet, the dead poet spoke again. Outside some dismal man was playing dismally on the cornet, and once the night was cut by a shrill cry of "Murder" ; but the poet read

Poets

on, oblivious of the present with its complexities and its terrors. And when in the small hours I left him and felt my way down and out into the dark street, he stood at the door, swaying in ecstasy, a candle in one hand, the dog's-eared book in the other, declaiming great verse into the sullen night.'

Companionship.

DRENCHED with rain, caked with mud, we rushed into the country town, scraping the wheel of a brewer's dray as we took the bridge. A howl of execration followed us; but my friend, who was driving his new motor-car for the first time, neither turned nor spoke. His keen face peered ahead: the speed fever coursed through his veins: it was nothing to him that a trail of curses had defiled our track from London.

When we reached the Inn he thrust his hand beneath his leather jacket and drew forth his watch. 'Under two hours,' he said. 'Good!' The motor buzzed and groaned, and just then a troop of yeomanry passed. My heart went out to the little horses, so sensitive and responsive; and, with a sudden longing, I thought of a slender roan mare that had been my companion in former days in this very town,—who had carried me bravely before the inrush of my passion for

Companionship

machinery and speed. I dreamt of her that night, and next morning persuaded my friend to postpone our return journey until the afternoon. For a few hours at least I would be faithful to an old love.

What a change two years had made in the Inn yard! At the corner a showy motor shop had been built; the yard had become a *garage*; peak-faced *chaffeurs* in oilskin garments stood waiting where, in old days, easy-limbed grooms had idled. There were motors in the coach-houses, steam eddied into the air; and over all hung the horrid smell of petrol. But at the end of the yard, where the tan-strewn incline led to the upper storey, the pleasant, familiar horsey atmosphere welcomed me; and there, forlorn enough, were a few horses, and among them the slender roan mare.

She fretted for the first half-hour, tossing her head, troubled by the bit and my unskilful handling of the reins. Had much commerce with motor-cars destroyed the little cunning I once had with man's loyal

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and ancient companion? It seemed so; but when we reached the crest of the downs the inspiration to give her her head—that small, wise head—came over me. I let the reins hang loose, dug my knees into her slight body, swayed to her movement; and away she went, her little hoofs hardly touching the crisp turf, her head outstretched, and I recapturing all the old rapture as we scampered across the trackless land. The rain beat down, and the hail: she inclined her head from the sting just in the old way, and bore me higher, higher until there was nothing but birds between us and the sky. Far below on the white roads that crossed and recrossed the valley, and beyond through other counties, motor-cars were racing across the land. Man had seized the new toy in both hands, crying that the days of the horse were numbered; but that brief morning when the roan mare and I were together, one and indivisible in ecstasy of motion, was worth all the journeys of all the motor-cars that have ever raced from luncheon to dinner.

Companionship

Then we descended to the place of steam and petrol. The groom stroked her wet nose and said, 'When the Lord takes her, He'll take a good mare.' I watched the little lady step up the tan-strewn incline to her dark lodging, and turned to find my motorist waiting to start.

The country whizzed past us : a road, always a road, stretched ahead : beneath us was always the panting inanimate thing that knew nothing, cared nothing, felt nothing : while up there, on those heights, horses were taking their own wayward way over the soft turf, their little hoofs just brushing the ground, their heads outstretched, and their bodies quivering with the joy that living things feel in service that is companionship and freedom.

The Pause.

SOMETHING had happened. What had happened one man alone knew—the Conductor. Five minutes before he had emerged from beneath the stage and taken his seat amid tumultuous plaudits. Then, silence and expectancy. The orchestra was ready; the first page of *The Valkyrie* score was open before the Conductor; each musician eyed him; to him the interminable faces of the audience were turned. He waited—the baton was rigid in his raised hand. A minute passed. The tension was almost unbearable. Another minute passed. The raised baton did not move. In those age-long minutes it seemed as if the whole world paused in sympathy with us waiting for relief from that silence. Would that baton never descend and release the music?

I looked around. Every cranny of the auditorium was filled; in the gallery, where I sat, you could not have squeezed a flute between the enthusiasts; and this gigantic

The Pause

audience had been willing, even eager, to devote four nights of a week to *The Ring of the Nibelung*—had been willing to leave the sunshine at five in the afternoon for the sake of ‘my Nibelung poem.’ This amazing Tone-Poet, who had worked for twenty-five years on *The Ring*, at one period leaving ‘Siegfried’ unfinished because he was ‘tired of heaping one silent score upon another,’ had actually changed the habits that generations had engrained in us. He had pushed back the clock for three hours. From his grave he had spoken, and thousands, at the tea-hour, were dressing themselves for the evening. Parliament would not dare so much.

Still that baton remained poised in the air. Would it never descend? It was as if the whole account of our spiritual and emotional life was garnered into that building awaiting the movement of the baton. Beyond, and around, the agitated world revolved; but on us had fallen the pause between two eternities. Here, in London, Wagner nearly half a century ago stayed, working in his spare time on the

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score of *The Valkyrie*, and complaining that the fret and noise caused him to lose 'the inner memory.'

'The inner memory'! Down there, far below, open before the rigid figure of the Conductor, was the silent score. A light shone upon it; but from where I sat no notes were visible. To my eyesight, in accordance with what we proudly call our experience, it was nothing but a sheet of white paper. Still by faith I knew (poor maligned faith!) that in this book was written the great duet of love and spring when the high doors sweep open inwards, revealing the loveliness of the forest by moonlight: that in this book was recorded the wild ride of the Valkyries. By faith I knew that: to my experience there was no scrap of notation on the open page. The key to those harmonies the Conductor held—still motionless, still with the baton upraised. Would that white wand never descend?

What vicissitudes of reverie two minutes can hold! Upsprang, to my imagination, above that white wand, the figure of Wagner, velvet-capped, velvet-coated,

The Pause

strong-jawed, deep-eyed, inspirer of wild enthusiasm and wilder hatred, exile, windlestraw of fortune, to whom was sent in his darkest hour that momentous message from Ludwig of Bavaria—‘Come here and finish your work.’ Upsprang the turrets of Neuschwanstein, that fairy palace of art and music where King and Subject forgot the world in the mazes of melody. In my ears sounded a passage in one of Wagner’s letters to Roeckel: ‘If one wishes to express the highest knowledge in popular images, one cannot do it otherwise than in the pure original teaching of the Buddha. . . . For that last result of Knowledge, for Fellow-suffering, there remains but one possible redemption—conscious denial of the will.’

Then, just then, the lights in the auditorium were lowered. For that, the Conductor’s wand, poised in the air, had been waiting. Twilight descended, the baton started, the musicians swayed to the signal, the lamps on their desks gleamed out, and into the darkness surged the opening of the overture.

A Night Piece.

DARKNESS came up while we were still talking ; imperceptibly the traffic in the street ceased, and on that outlying part of London fell the hush of night. Round and about the pleasure heart of the Town life sped gaily and feverishly ; but in the room where we sat there was silence and stillness. Peace had fallen upon our corner of the world, and when we moved upstairs I was glad to find in the room no light but the flare from the wood fire. The long windows that reached to the ground were open, and the room was filled with the fragrance of spring flowers. From the river, along which the lights of vessels slowly passed, fresh air blew into that flower-scented darkness. It was home. The world was shut out ; yet it was so near that we could almost feel the throbbing of its pulse. We stood at the open window watching that unrehearsed night piece—the wide sky above, the dim river beyond, just beneath us the trim public garden

A Night Piece

with its blossoming trees, and the moon, nearing the full, riding high against the flying clouds. It was the hour for reflection, still and witching.

My companion repeated the passage he had been reading aloud to me an hour before. 'Who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not actually help God to be more effectively faithful to His own greater tasks?'

While he was speaking rain began. Something moved on one of the seats against the iron railing of the public garden. A wretched old man rose, turned up his face to the rain, gathered his rags closer about him, then huddled down again into his corner. A street lamp shone pale upon the outcast, so inured to hardship that rain could not vex his slumbers.

The shower passed. The moon shone forth again, and showed the river flowing through the night. To us came the wholesome scent of moist earth and refreshed shrubs. 'Once,' said my com-

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panion, 'on a day's walk I passed five rivers. On a hill above the third there was a convent. I climbed up to ask the way, and a nun gave me directions through a tiny opening, the size of her face, in the wicket. She——'

He ceased speaking, for just then a woman came out of the night, roused the sleeping man, pulled him to his feet, and pushed him away out of our sight. Hardly had they gone when the silence was cut by a scream—long and shrill. We moved towards the door—then waited. The scream was not repeated. The clock struck ten.

'I have heard,' said my companion, 'that every night, always at the same hour, when they believe the forces of evil are strongest, there is an order of nuns who pray that the souls of all in the outside world may be preserved from evil and danger. Their prayers begin at ten o'clock, and for an hour every night these lonely women entreat, with tears, that the stalking evil in the world, of which they know so little, may be resisted. Ah!

A Night Piece

those prayers! "Who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not——"

Another scream, quick and sharp, rent the air; and before it had died away out of the night came a file of policemen. We heard the tread of their feet on the pavement by the river-side. Then a sharp 'Halt!' from the sergeant. Two men detached themselves from the file and ran in the direction of the scream. 'March!' cried the sergeant. Then we heard the scream for the third time, shouting, and the rush of feet.

My companion drew the curtains. As he lighted the candles, with an unsteady hand, he finished the quotation, speaking in a low voice,—'may not actually help God to be more effectually faithful to His own greater tasks?'

I looked through the curtains. All was very still.



Our Dream.

THIS is what I read: 'Those whom we believe to be dead have entered into real life, and they wait for our dream to finish.' Putting down the book and closing my eyes, I recalled, without effort, the occasion when a companion had whispered that communication into my astonished ears. Now, by chance, idly turning the leaves of a volume in a second-hand book-shop, the message reached me again, bringing back the time when I had first heard it. Was it a dream or reality? Had I really experienced the magnetism of that night, and heard that music?

The impression of the violinist's personality was strangely vivid. I saw her once, and once only, in the rough dining-room of a Bavarian inn among the mountains. She had walked modestly towards the temporary platform, indifferent to the family parties that were gathered at the tables. A young girl, pale, with large eyes and nondescript hair, she stood there

Our Dream

for a moment tuning her violin. Then she played ; and gradually the babble of talk ceased, heads were stretched forward, and over that assembly came silence. Did she realise the power of her extraordinary gift? Had she any prevision of the years to come when she would capture the world as she held the few in that bare room? Probably not. Her whole sensibility was given to her playing ; sometimes the emotion that went in gusts through her slight body, impelling music from the strings, made me start as if a shot had been fired. She played : it was as if we listened to a message from the dead. Voices spoke in the silence of that room. And a living voice, my companion's, whispered : 'Those whom we believe to be dead have entered into real life, and they wait for our dream to finish.'

Our dream ! But when the violinist had finished, the spell that she had woven over us persisted. We were still initiates at a mystery. What happened later remains also part of the excursion into the unrevealed whither the violinist led us.

Life's Lesser Moods

One of the German family gatherings sang a part-song very quietly. This was the song :

Wo weilt er ?—Im kalten, im schaurigen Land.
Wo ruht er ?—Am Meere auf steinigem Sand.
Was treibt er ?—Er haschet das fliehende Glück.
Was denkt er ?—Er sehnt sich zur Heimat zurück.

O grüsst ihn, ihr Wolken im schaurigen Land ;
O kühlt ihn, ihr Lüftchen, am steinigem Sand ;
O kränz ihn, du falsches treuloses Glück.
Ich ruf' ihn : ' O kehre zur Heimat zurück ! '

The spell still held. I looked at my companion. Our minds were filled with the same bitter-sweet thought. For him there was no return : only the waiting for our dream to finish. Then a figment of that dream, a longing that was warp and woof of it, found expression, and the Germans turned, stared, and listened gravely, eyes peering through spectacles at my companion, who sang in English this petition :

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

Our Dream

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come.
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

So that episode in our dream ended. It was long ago. I lived it over again in a flash, as the man in the German fable lived three hundred years listening for three minutes to a bird's song.

Wonder.

I SAT in the garden with a book. The air was hay-scented ; but twilight had hidden the flowers, and I could only just distinguish the passage I was reading : ‘ The ancient Greeks recognised four elements—fire, air, water, and earth. The Pythagoreans added a fifth and called it ether, the fifth essence which they said flew upward at creation—and out of it the stars were made.’ Then I closed the book and looked up. On the crest of the hill low down behind the trees appeared a light glowing like a conflagration, but moving. Slowly it crept upwards, becoming paler as it moved, until the round disc of the moon was clear of the trees.

I sat there in the hay-scented air, my face upraised, brooding over the ever-new spectacle, remembering those Pythagoreans whose thoughts had also turned upwards, and recalling two sights I had seen that day, both happening in the ether, both arousing wonder in the observers. And

Wonder

the wonder of the first had been the wonder of a dog. He sat on the margin of a lake to which my wanderings of the day had brought me : he sat nose in the air, staring at his master, who was performing feats unparalleled in canine circles. Near the end of the lake a scaffolding, tall as a church steeple, had been raised, and the man was practising high diving for the sports that were to be held in the afternoon. One time he would turn two summersaults in the air, then enter the water head first with a clean, swift cut ; another time he would dive straight from the platform ; but whatever method he chose the wonder in the dog's eyes never changed. The antics of his master's bright body darting through the air fascinated the dog, filled him with all the wonder that possessed the Pythagoreans when they imagined the fifth essence flying upwards to make the stars.

The second sight was the wonder of a great multitude, who broke off their duty or their pleasure to gaze upon a sight that had never been seen before above London. It was late in the afternoon when suddenly

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high in the clouds appeared the airship. It was in two parts, the upper portion like a great torpedo, the lower a flimsy car suspended by ropes and rocking perilously in the wind. It swept along, making a straight course through the air, alone in the firmament, a gigantic beast, controlled by a dot in the swaying car. We watched it sweep through the sky, then it dipped below the houses, and we saw it no more. All the world of London was gazing while it passed. For this was a sight to recall in after years, to prattle about round the fire on winter evenings, over which to nod the octogenarian head and murmur of the first airship sailing over London. And as I went homewards the passage of that harbinger of the conquest of the air was still exciting the world of London. Groups were gathered at the street corners, pointing to the sky, gesticulating, and describing the passage of the airship through the void.

Of these things I thought as I sat in the hay-scented garden : of that fancy of the Pythagoreans, of the dumb wonder of the dog, of London's upturned face gazing in

Wonder

amazement at the sky. Then I came back to earth, to the evening paper, and read that the endeavour to sail the airship had been unsuccessful—that after a spasmodic attempt it had bumped to earth, and that finally the inventor had removed the motor, treated the machine as a balloon, and sailed away.

Still our wonder had been real enough while it lasted : as real as the belief of the Pythagoreans. They had never discovered their error. I had. What did the knowledge profit me? Perhaps the experience of the dog was happier—wonder smeared by no disillusion, faith undestroyed, and the certitude that he would have again, after a little while, sense of his master's companionship.

The East.

THERE may be a dozen, there may be a score of them, roaming through England. Who can tell? To the Western eye all these thin, quick-moving Orientals look alike. I have met them or him in London at all hours of the day and night, always with a little bundle of mats flung over the left shoulder. He wears a fez. That is his distinguishing note: like the tight-fitting black coat, shabby. His pinched face, the colour of coffee-with-milk, has the furtive, hunted look of a sojourner in a strange land—alien and unsympathetic. I have never seen him sell a mat. Stop him, and he will throw them one by one over his right arm, crying, ‘Nice mats. Nice mats for nice house. Nice mats.’

Once I overtook him on a Surrey road. Far ahead I had seen his figure shambling along, and as I passed he offered me a magenta article worked with silver dragons; but the moment was not propitious. I went on my way, and did not think of

The East

him again until a late hour that night, when the door of the village inn bar-parlour opened, and flashed the East into a company of Surrey yokels. He stood at the entrance smiling, showing his white teeth, repeating his few words of English, pointing through the tobacco smoke to his mats, and stroking them.

The yokels stared, and looked at one another open-mouthed ; then slow smiles broke over their faces. A fuddled labourer in the corner brought down his pot of beer heavily upon the table and guffawed. That was the signal for a fire of slow-witted chaff against the shivering figure who stood smiling and cajoling in the doorway, not understanding a word, hoping that he had found a market for his wares, and repeating his few words of English, 'Nice mats. Nice mats for nice house. Nice mats.'

An old man, the grandfather of that village bar-parlour, who sat near me on the bench, frowned. The comprehension of the situation shown in his eyes moved me to comment on the tendency of the

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untraveller person to laugh at anything that is foreign to his experience. 'Our insularity,' I began, encouraged by his attention, 'shows itself in——' He cut me short, placed his clay pipe on the table, and inclining his venerable head towards mine, said in a confidential tone—

'I've seen them making them mats. They sit cross-legged on the floor as close as they can get to a pan of burning charcoal, and sometimes they light a pipe and take a few whiffs. They don't talk, and they don't seem to notice that you are looking at them; and they go on all day working at them mats.'

He spoke at great length, not very illuminatively, but I was interested in the man rather than in his experiences. It was plain that he had wandered, had seen strange cities. When he paused to re-light his pipe, I asked, 'You have travelled?' He shook his head. 'It was at the Earl's Court Exhibition I see them making mats,' he answered.

'Nice mats. Nice mats for nice house. Nice mats.' A piece of cheese was thrown

The East

at the mat-seller. He ducked, smiled, opened the door, and slipped out into the night. The East—enigmatic, indifferent, equal to any fate—departed as mysteriously as it had come, and the West returned to its beer.

The old man looked at me earnestly, replaced his pipe on the table, and said slowly, ‘They sit cross-legged on the floor. They don’t talk, and they——’

The Real Thing.

THEY urged him to join their Metaphysical Society, and because his world was grey just then (he was hardly convalescent after an operation for appendicitis) he listened. The world begins in wonder, they said, quoting from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; to which he answered by repeating the ancient definition of metaphysics, that it is like looking into a dark room for a black hat that is not there. Still they persisted with this fish that was worth catching, and he, being still very unwell, was caught. Strange to say, he found the first meeting interesting and attractive. They foregathered in a small, bare, ground-floor room, looking upon a white Sussex road. Busts of four philosophers stood on black pedestals in the corners. Over the fireplace (the fire never burned properly) was a photograph of the head of Julius Cæsar, with the firm lips and the perfect brow. The head shining palely from the grey paper mount reminded

The Real Thing

him of a watery moon against a bank of clouds. At the first meeting they announced that metaphysics was the real thing; and sitting there, wrapped in a great-coat, with dark spots dancing before his eyes, he half believed them.

At the second meeting, a month later, when he was feeling much better, Nature smiled and called to the truant. He heard. The blame was theirs for keeping the door open. It was one of those autumn days when summer rushes back for a last adieu, bringing with her nostalgia for river, down, and sky. A hard-headed Scots student was reading the latest utterance of an eminent philosopher—a closely-reasoned, quite admirable exposition of his own philosophy, and a merciless exposure of the mental fluidity of the Barbarian philosopher's mind.

The door was open: that was the mistake. There was nothing but a strip of garden between them and the highway—just a white road winding between heathery moors, and then climbing. It was folly to let the sights and sounds of the happy out-o'-doors peep in upon their

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anæmic gropings in the dark for the real thing. The student read, and the truant saw four saplings on the crest of a hill beyond the road, slender against the blue sky ; he read, and the truant saw the sheep grazing ; he read :

The philosopher's first business, then, is to state his problem, as clearly and unambiguously as possible. His next work is to unite all his organised knowledge in the framing of a hypothetical solution, in formulating hypothetically the principle which is the ground of the opposition stated in the problem.

A boy thrust a basket of apples over the garden hedge, and shook them till the room stirred with their fragrance. Nobody bought one, and the boy was motioned away ; but the good smell of the apples brought back to the truant the thought of orchards, green turf dappled with sunlight, a ladder against a tree, and wicker baskets piled high with fruit. He lost the thread of the discourse, and when he recaught the argument it was to hear :

It is now, I think, sufficiently evident that the common method of mysticism and pluralism

The Real Thing

is an attempt to cut off the one from the many, the universal from the particular. The aim of mysticism——

Just then a troop of horses galloped past, each animal with a girl on its back, riding with the easy confidence of youth which knows no fear, her face flushed with the joy of action, her hair streaming in the wind. Along the road the girls clattered at a hand gallop, and the room was filled with their laughter. The truant moved in his seat. He realised how hard it is to be a philosopher in a dark chamber, when girls are galloping over downs, and apples are waiting to be shaken from trees ; but the Scots student proceeded with even voice, and caught the truant again with these words :

The mystic turns from an inexplicable Many to a mysterious One, the pluralist from a One, supposed to be colourless and empty, to a rich unanalysable Many.

At that moment two men passed up the road, talking, and one said : "Then you take a pilot at Sheerness."

That was just too much. He slipped through the open door.



The Strangers.

THEY were strangers, and because they were strangers, who would pass on the morrow from that refuge in the hills their several ways, they talked of intimate things which must not be set down here. In the end one related an experience that evolved naturally from their confidences ; the second did likewise, and the third.

The first, who was a traveller, said : 'It's the world outside experience that possesses me when I am alone. Here is my case ! As far back as I can remember, a certain figure has appeared to me in my dreams—a man, twice life-size, clothed in skins, which flapped as he moved. I always knew when he was approaching, and he never frightened me. As a child I regarded him as a kind of nurse, later in life as a companion. If the room was dark when I woke I could see him just the same. Even if my eyes were closed I could see him by means of the light

The Strangers

that gleamed behind my eyeballs in those moments. I called him "My Old Man of the Woods," or "The Beckoner,"—for although his arms were still, his eyes seemed always to be calling me away somewhere. He never appeared when I was about to make a journey : only when I was languid and inclined to stay at home and be comfortable. So vivid did this apparition become in after life that I made a drawing of it. A year ago—I know you will find this hardly credible—I went by invitation to a man's house in Bayswater. He had been stationed at some place in Africa—I think it was Gogo—and he had brought back with him a lot of photographs. He had turned the pictures in his room to the wall and pinned the photographs on their backs. One of them—I saw it the moment I entered the room—was an enlarged photograph of a tribal god. It was exactly like the drawing I had made of my Beckoner. O no : he didn't think it strange !'

The second, who was a philosopher, said : 'My most persistent dream has

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been in the nature of a performance, a happening in which I had no lot, but which had for me a very real significance. The vision was always in two parts. In the foreground were a number of restless figures, clothed in bright colours, and doing all manner of odd and fantastic things. What they were doing I could never quite understand, for my attention was always concentrated on the veiled figure at the back. It was there before the others began: it remained after they had finished, turning, always turning slowly, never tiring, never revolving quicker at one time than at another. It was like Eternity—a changeless but constantly moving background to those ever-shifting figures that played their brief games against its continuity. Some time ago I saw a performance of Arab tumblers and jugglers. Before they began, a curtain was withdrawn from the back of the stage, disclosing a veiled figure turning slowly just like the figure in my dream—unmoved, uninterested, detached, just going on in that endless movement. The jugglers and

The Strangers

tumblers finished their performance ; that veiled figure continued. And when the curtain fell it was still turning.'

The third, who was a writer, said : ' Mine has been a presence, a sensation rather than a figure. It has come to me at all times, but never in my sleep. All my life I have longed for it ; but the appearances of this shadowy companion have been infrequent. Whatever of good there has been in my work has come from that companionship—brief, sudden, wordless, have been those visits, and gone before I realised that a new idea, or a ray of clearing light, had been flashed at me from something that was not myself. So sure have I been of this, that sometimes when a friend has praised a poem or an essay of mine, I have answered : " I did not do it. Something outside me spoke, and I heard." As I grew older these communications became kindlier, less disturbing as it were. They do not now generally take the form of ideas : they are rather explanatory, and bring with them a sense of consolation. And the years have

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brought me this knowledge: that it depends on myself, on the self-discipline of the day or week, whether the visits of this companion shall be frequent or infrequent. It is always ready to give, I am not always ready to receive; but this unseen companion is always near—waiting. I am as sure of that as of my own identity.'

The Outcast.

DARK was the December afternoon ; but joy met me as I turned into the Square. Every window of the corner house was lighted, and under the trees gleamed the lamps of carriages waiting to unload the children. Clutching one another's arms, laughing, with flushed, eager faces, they tripped up the steps beneath the umbrella held by a liveried footman. There were dancing, a conjuror, a Punch and Judy, and a ping-pong tournament. I schottished with a child whose hair just reached my knee, and, when she left me abruptly, sank on a couch to recover. At the other end of the couch, watching and faintly smiling, was the childless woman. Youth had gone from her. She was worn, pale, and heavy-eyed ; but there was something in her face that told of compensations.

How it came about I hardly know, for amid that shouting and laughter we could scarcely hear our own voices ; but a chance name, followed by a few questions,

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recalled what I knew about her, and the little band of visionaries with whom she was associated.

‘Does it make you any happier?’ I asked.

The thin line of her eyebrows moved slowly upwards. ‘Happier?’ she repeated. ‘It was what I longed and longed for all my youth. That knowledge is mine now for ever. Life would be unbearable without it; but with it—O!’

The band began to play *Carmen*. My late infant partner, whose heart had been softened by the loss of her comb, seized my wrist and ran me off to the dancing-room, where we galloped heartily through the figures. Towards the end of the grand chain I managed to evade her, and returned, panting, to the couch. The lady who had found happiness was still there. *Carmen* had not driven her from my mind. I picked up the thread of our conversation: indeed, it had not been dropped.

‘And nothing can take that sure and certain hope away from you now?’

The Outcast

‘Nothing.’

‘Well, you have many with you. Burke was profoundly conscious of the soul that underlies and outlives material events. It was the secret of his strength. Maeterlinck says that a lucky man is one who, in a previous incarnation, was a sage. In him, hidden deep in his soul, the old wisdom and foresight linger unsuspected, prompting him to do or not to do this or that. He unconsciously obeys, and so is —lucky.’

She nodded.

‘But does it really make you happy? You do not look a happy woman.’

‘There are different ways of happiness.’

‘One way, which the world has found very workable, is to forget one’s self and one’s soul in giving joy to others. You may see examples of it here.’

A burst of laughter came from the Punch and Judy room.

‘This sort of thing must all seem very unplaced in your life,’ I said.

‘I am used to being an outcast,’ she answered.

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My late infant partner brought two companions. They frisked before me like young lambs, and shouted that I must come and join in a game of progressive ping-pong. I realised that it was the accident of sex, and—health, that had prevented me from being an outcast.

Aldwych, 1903.

IT was the last night of winter, and I stood alone in Aldwych, reading the name on a rough board nailed to a post.

The hour was one of the few in the twenty-four when London is strange and new. Between two and four in the morning she has her nightly change from restlessness to peace. Then the contour of her earth becomes visible; hills and valleys show themselves; beneath the multitude of her lights, the curves of her streets, and the character of her buildings are revealed. At this hour the sense of personal identity waxes in the solitude of her familiar, yet most unfamiliar, vastness. The few wayfarers are remote, as fugitive, under the eternal arch of the sky, as the changes upon the face of the streets that are forever altering and remodelling London.

‘Aldwych.’ A street lamp gleamed upon the black letters. It is a beginning—that is all. Rough planks make the roadway, which runs for a few yards

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between hoardings, skirting long-hidden buildings, and then loses itself in slums. All will go. Like an army this plank-laid lane will force its way, piercing, spreading, until, a few years hence, some home-returning Englishman will find the old landmarks gone, and in their place this sign-mark of material progress, superb and spacious—Aldwych.

Uncomplaining London! Not a day passes but something of yourself vanishes. At that great clearing by the Strand what memories lurk in the tumble of bricks and stones! Even the rats have gone now, and in the silence of this hour before dawn there is, besides myself, but one living person to say good-bye to the winter that has seen the breaking up of the Old and the beginning of this piece of the New London. He is the old man, grey, time-stained, and bent, who nods near his pail of burning coals. Behind him, far over his head, on the top of a new theatre, one white pillar points to the sky. That, too, in time must go, for London is ever being born again. One thing only will remain

Aldwych

—the river. The Thames watched the birth of London ; she will be flowing by broken bridges when London is no more. Just across the road, at the foot of a little dark hill, she passes on without rest, while London sleeps. What sights this river has seen ! How much she knows ! To-day she has trickled and spurted through meadows which are bright with the signs of spring. Beneath the shelter of her banks, where the sun falls, primroses have scattered themselves ; she has seen the yellow celandine rising from the fields, and the early blossoms of the fruit trees. Where she has been the earth is trembling with the raptures of reluctant spring, which make no sign in Aldwych. Out beyond, no longer controlled by bridges and embankments, the ancient river spreads herself, stretches out wider and wider until, her task done, she mingles with the ocean—her home, where, in the vastness, the sky is flecked by flights of birds following the spring.

The dawn is moving up over Aldwych. The old man stirs, and kicks his bit of fire

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into a flame. I see the huge crane, the blocks of stone ready to be hoisted, the board on which the name of the new street is painted, and the huge white building that has sprung up above the débris of the broken houses. New tenants are waiting to go in. Already their names are blazoned across the front. The old man rummages among the ancient bricks. He is like them. Neither hope nor fear, and no grief can touch him now. This flaming New London is nothing to the night guardian of the tools that have broken up these dingy dwellings of Old London.

He huddles back into his shelter, and as he sleeps the first day of spring breaks over Aldwych.

The Unemployed.

WE stood, the overworked man and I, watching the procession of the unemployed crawling towards Hyde Park. Thin, pinched, undersized, with the furtive look which hunger brings, they marched four abreast, and the traffic stopped to let the failures pass. Their meagre figures seemed piteously small beside the robust policemen who escorted them; over their heads floated dingy red banners with 'Unemployed' scrawled upon them; along the footpath ran the collectors, rattling the money-boxes, and thrusting them into the faces of the onlookers. With many stoppages, the procession passed along the frozen street, bringing with it another banner on which were inscribed the words 'Work for All, Overwork for None.' My companion smiled bitterly. 'There's work for them all in the country,' he said, 'if they would only be content to go back to the land. Curse these cities! Well!'—he looked at his watch—'I must go back to my fifteen

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hours working day.' The sad procession passed on slowly, and when it stopped the men stamped on the ground, blew on their fingers, and huddled their thin garments closer about them. 'Still freezin',' remarked one : 'I must keep my 'ounds in the kennel for another day. The Duchess 'ill be disappointed.' The policeman to whom he addressed the remark did not smile.

Suddenly the sun shone out. It flashed on the telegraph wires, transformed the windows of the house into a dazzle of light, and I saw, in quick vision, another regiment of the unemployed ; but these were neither hungry nor cold, and not unhappy. The frost had brought them joy. They were skating on a lake, tall fir trees bending beneath their white burden on the margin of the ice ; and on them, on the tops of the mountain, on all that wide land, the winter sun glowed. There was no wind. 'Still freezing,' cried one, laughed joyously, and glided away with his companions across the ringing ice, the flush of health on their faces, the joy of living in their eyes.

Then the sun disappeared, and I was

The Unemployed

back in London streets face to face with the other unemployed. Mournfully I watched them pass.

Later in the day I met them again. It was twilight time ; but the fog had made an end of the day early in the afternoon. Over everything hung that murky gloom, over the procession of the unemployed, over the faces of the employed who left their work to watch. The day's tramp was ending ; they were going eastwards—home—but the fog was so dense that I could see only those who slouched close by. Somewhere far in front the head of the procession felt its way through the dim streets ; somewhere far behind the tail followed obediently ; and out of the thick night came the rattle of the coins in the collecting-boxes. A woman near me pushed the box contemptuously away. ' Want work, do they ? ' she cried. ' I've been a week trying to get a man to mend a window-sash.'

Then, as I walked with them, a naphtha lamp flared out from a costermonger's barrow, and again I saw in quick vision that other regiment of the unemployed. With

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them, too, it was freezing ; but there was no fog in that clear air, and the moon rode high in the blue-night sky. A rocket shot upwards, and at that signal their procession started. Japanese lanterns, boughs of ever-green, flags and streamers waved above them ; bonfires blazed beside their path as down the mountain side they raced on the crisp snow, laughing, shouting. Lighted torches were in their hands ; the flush of health was on their faces, the joy of living in their eyes.

The barrow with the naphtha lamp passed on. I watched the last straggler of the London unemployed disappear into the fog.

One Winter Night.

IT was half-past ten at night, foggy, slushy, and bitterly cold. A few flakes of snow were falling, as the Charity Organisation Society official and I beat our way against the north-easter to a west-end slum, where he was due to make an inquiry. Once we stopped. It was in front of the blind wall of a place of entertainment where the patrons of the cheaper seats wait, in queue, for the opening of the doors. Just above, protruding from the wall, was a verandah ; below was a grating through which hot air from laundry furnaces or kitchen fires ascended. Standing on this grating close together, with hands outstretched to the warmth, were huddled a score or so of outcasts. The wind screamed round the corner, piercing through their rags. These wretched men and women stared at us dumbly, and at the figure of a blind man who passed slowly up and down that line of misery crying not ' Matches,' nor ' Boot-laces,' nor ' Pity

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the blind,' but this: 'He openeth deep things of the Spirit to them that love Him.' These words he repeated slowly and often, tapping with his stick on the pavement. I still hear the rattle of his stick and his hoarse voice crying those words from out his darkness: 'He openeth deep things of the Spirit to them that love Him.'

Across the road was a fried-fish shop. 'No,' said the official: 'even conditions like these must not affect the principle of alms-giving. I have never spent a penny in indiscriminate charity, and never will. The State is prepared to feed and house them. If you give them food it will merely delay their going to the workhouse, where we want them to go.'

We walked on to the slum where he was to make his inquiry. I waited an hour, in shelter, and thought of happy sights I had seen in the country that day—a yellow-hammer perching on a rail, and then flying off, a flash of colour, into the sunlight; a heron fluttering above a pond, and settling on the bough of a tree;

One Winter Night

a duck waddling down a bank, and seating itself, astonished but composed, on the ice, as if it were an arm-chair ; a yellow road, powdered with snow, shining up and over the brow of the hill, lighter than the sky ; the crescent moon hanging above the fir trees.

When the official came downstairs, we went out again into the night. The theatre people had gone home, the streets were bleak and bare, the wind had risen ; but that warm air still came from the grating. There were double the number of outcasts huddled together waiting—for what ? The blind man had disappeared, but across the way the lighted windows of the fried-fish shop steamed with vapour that said : ‘Food ! food !’ I insisted. It was too late. A movement of expectation swept over the outcasts. They saw, as we saw, two men and a woman, well dressed, approach. Slung on a broom-handle were two pails full to the brim of hot pea-soup. The woman carried a cup.

The happy three passed joyously down the line, dipping and giving.

The official frowned.



The Way Home.

THE last train left London twenty-five minutes after midnight. It was a slothful thing, stopping at every station, starting again reluctantly—having at that late hour, like the passengers, lost the relish for life. On the floors of the carriages was littered the flotsam of the day, and the lights were dim, hardly revealing the tired travellers. The guard stood yawning at the face of his watch, protecting it with the palm of his hand from the thin rain that blew in icily from the sodden night. ‘Sixty hours of rain on end,’ he snapped as he slammed the carriage door.

Our track was black, feebly illuminated by the platform lamps, and we left blackness behind us. For, as we rumbled out of the stations, sometimes before we had begun to move, a porter extinguished the lamps. It was as if the end of all things was at hand, and we, lagging on the stage, were witnesses of the suppression—drowsily indifferent. The express that roared

The Way Home

brightly by us seemed unnecessarily active and I sighed contentedly as, alighting at my station, I witnessed, in turn, the extinction of its lamps, and felt my way out into the vast loneliness. I seemed to have wandered into a strange country : all the familiar landmarks had suffered a water change. Road and path were one, covered with a shallow sheet of flood, and as I plashed through it a white mist rose up from the meadows. At the cross-roads the wreaths of vapour—clammy, chimerical—met and enveloped me. I took to the high land, seeking the red road that would lead me circuitously home ; and on that height it was eerie to hear the noise of many waters trickling and running in the night. There was no sound but that of their incessant tricklings through newly-formed courses—hundreds of them—here meeting, there plashing into a depression, all hastening down into the brook, now a torrent that I could hear roaring in the valley. The sensation was one of hearing, not of sight ; for the night was moonless, and there were no stars in the sky. This upland had

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become articulate. It was as if a myraid company of voices had been released and were speaking in the waters that, having drenched the land, were now busily boring little pathways. There were no houses on that red road, and no vehicle had yet dared to traverse its rocky surface ; but at the point where it issued into civilisation there was a house, and I was glad to know of its propinquity, although the form was hidden.

Suddenly a lamp shone in one of the top windows. It moved, and in that instant a tongue of fire flickered up the curtains. Not a human sound broke the silence. The blind was now alight ; then a hand shot out, pulled at the fabrics, which fell in a cascade of flame. That glowing window was blotted out as suddenly as it had flared into sight. The house shrank back into the darkness—disappeared, and the land was again wrapped in humid gloom.

I plashed on towards the village green. In the horse-pond were two swans contentedly enjoying the superfluous water.

The Journey.

A BOOK-SHOP window arrested me. Pushing my way through the traffic, I stopped to read the pages open flat against the glass. Through one pane I read: 'June's nightingales for me. . . . Leaf cries to leaf: we change not, though you change.' Through another, this: 'We hear his voice and feel that he had already come to know what he afterwards compressed into a single poignant line—'All life is but a wandering to find home.'

Then I moved aside to make way for a thin-lipped individual, who came out of the doorway with a book under his arm, while a voice, raucous but cajoling, further disturbed my reverie. I turned. It was the liveried conductor of the new electric service who spoke. He stood on the kerb, pointing to the smart motor-omnibus. 'Now, ladies and gentlemen,' he was saying, 'who's for the country? Who's for the fir woods where the nightingales sing?' The afternoon was my own.

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I stepped into the motor-omnibus, and seated myself opposite the thin-lipped individual, whose eyes were already fixed on the pages of his purchase.

The first hour of that drive from the heart of London was familiar, and but for the exhilaration of the rushing air might have been dull; but when we reached those parts where the old, out-lying villages are being linked up by paved roads to the metropolis—where the line of jerry buildings is broken here by an old manor-house, there by a thatched cottage crumbling between a new terrace and a new fire-station—the wonder of this unresting, hungry London took possession of me, and I looked to my companion, feeling the need of some one to share with me the sense of her intolerable vastness.

He raised his eyes, smiled quietly, and said, ‘Do you know a poem of Emily Brontë’s called “Last Lines”? It has seven stanzas, and it begins: “No coward soul is mine, No trembler in the world’s storm-troubled sphere . . .” The author of this book, where the poem is quoted, says

The Journey

that it contains the teaching of Aristotle transferred from the abstract to the concrete. Curious how thought bridges the centuries—Aristotle to Emily Brontë.’

The motor-omnibus stopped to take up two secular priests ; one was fat, the other thin. Each fumbled in his pocket for his breviary, and with rapid movement of the lips, with eyes fixed on the thumbed page, each began to read his office. Neither they nor the thin-lipped man seemed to notice that at last London was becoming exhausted in her battle with the country, and that twilight was falling on the hedges. At the next stopping-place they all alighted. The conductor lit the big lamps of the motor-omnibus, and we rushed on along the illuminated road into the darkness beyond. Half-an-hour later the brand-new motor-omnibus broke down. After waiting patiently for some time, I walked on, away from the sound of the hammering—on—until I found the fir woods, but no nightingales were singing.

I lost my way on a heath, and wandered for two hours until I came to another wood.

Life's Lesser Moos

Through the trees a lighted window shone.
All life is but a wandering to find home—
for you, for me, for Aristotle and Emily
Brontë, for priest and philosopher.

Then I tapped at the window, and when
I tapped the light moved and came nearer.

The Time of Buttercups.

THE roses were out on the cottage walls, and they rambled over the warm bricks. The high box hedge that secluded one of the gardens from the road could not hide the giant poppies that gleamed red behind the border of green. As I passed they flashed back the sunshine in a trail of light. Now the roses and poppies were incidental. It was the time of buttercups, meadows of them, stretching from dyke to dyke along the marsh. The land was mostly yellow, and where it was not yellow it was green, and white—such dazzling whites in the sunshine. White were the sails of the toy boats on the river that wound through the marsh; white were the backs of the geese that walked gravely in single file through the buttercups; white was the hawthorn that lingered still; white were the garments of the boy cricketers on that first day of June.

The village dozed, and when the treble of the boys' voices was momentarily

hushed I heard the lark, and intermittently the decadent cuckoo. But as the day wore on to afternoon, the figures of little girls white-shod, with white stockings encasing their little legs, and dresses yellow like the buttercups, or red like the poppies, began to trail through the hot lanes. They carried garlands ; but around the hems of their dresses were buttercups, and strings of buttercups were fastened in their hair. Buttercups, too, powdered the field behind the windmill where the maypole stood, not so high as the mast of a vessel of one hundred tons as in the old days, but quite a proper maypole with coloured ribbons fluttering in the wind. England had not quite forgotten the old times when her heart was merry, and with horn and tabor she brought the hawthorn home at sunrise. The first of June was a little late in the year to gather the hawthorn and to dance round the maypole ; but this was the children's festival, and what is a month in the life of a child ? May Monday or Whit Monday, who could not dance to such a tune as 'Come, Lasses and Lads,'

The Time of Buttercups

in the time of buttercups and roses, with never a cloud in the sky, all the trees clothed in green, and birds singing? Little boys in smock coats, red beribboned, stood in a circle enclosing the little girls in buttercup yellow and poppy red frocks, who danced their sun-bonnets off their heads and twined the coloured ribbons about the maypole.

The lightning of yesterday had made a long clean cut from top to root in an oak tree that had seen centuries of June days, saying, as it seared, 'Your time has come : another June shall see you leafless' ; near by three brisk Revivalists had drawn their van covered with warning texts into a field, and were even now pitching their tent for the evening service ; but such finger-points and hints of the ways of the external world must wait for the passing of the May Queen, chosen just because she was beautiful, and for no other reason. Borne shoulder-high came this garlanded child, buttercups round the hem of her dress, roses in her hair—emblematic of the old world's homage to beauty.

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To-morrow we will revert to the grey ways of the world and approve the custom of prizes for good conduct and intellectual industry ; but to-day we bend playfully to young beauty and young vigour — each honoured, each borne shoulder-high, the prettiest girl and the best boy cricketer on the first of June in the time of buttercups.

Isolation and a Song.

THE village leads nowhere. It is a freak, born in the hills, poorly nourished, but clinging tenaciously to life. Past the last house the single street ends, dwindles into a track, then commingles with the moor. Hovering over the beyond you may see an eagle, and beneath, here and there, a farm. Shepherds know the way.

For three months in the year the village is dead to the world—snow-bound. When, in early spring, the first messenger from civilisation arrives, the cry is for matches. He has travelled seventeen miles by a road that clammers between the hills, wild, lonely, passing at long distances shepherds—rough, hairy, silent men, with the keen, quick eyes of thrushes, who speak a language that their dogs know.

To-day it is heather all the way. The village has been reclaimed from the heather, as have the few solitary farms whose granite buildings start out white



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from the purple. The sounds are few—the crack of a gun, the cry of the peewit, the bark of a dog, the moan of the wind, and the fall of the river over boulders. The sights are a wet man carrying a fishing-rod, and the gaunt women of the village eternally busy. Many of them know no other world but this place of isolation where they were born. Too poor to travel, too old to walk, they have long ceased to desire change. They are not even curious.

So incurious are some that they have not taken the few steps across the street to the fields where to-day the annual show of 'beasts' is being held. Thither have trudged the lonely folk from the beyond, bringing their creatures with them—shaggy oxen, sleek polled cattle, Highland bulls, black-faced sheep heavy with creamy wool, long-tailed mares, foals, wild-looking horses, collies, donkeys, and tiny Scotch terriers that will run fifty miles in a day and be eager for another jaunt on the morrow. Men and beasts alike look shaggy and untamed. The hair of the Highland oxen

Isolation and a Song

falls over their tawny human faces. In turn they are led with the other animals to a ring, where they show their stature and strength without pride. The men who have brought them in from the hills are strangely detached. The parade finished, they stand solitary by their animals, unused to such congregations, unwilling to be sociable, speaking a few words to one another in their soft Gaelic, waiting for evening and the hour for departure to the life they know.

Apart from the others, in solitary magnificence, looking like some ungroomed beast of primeval times, chained to a post by a ring through its nose, is the Highland bull that has taken the first prize. The shock-headed man who guards him has pocketed the red ticket, superfluous testimony to the worth of his monarch, and sits, his back turned to the ring, peering into the distance. He, like the others, is tired of the competitive arena, and would be away from the babble of men, in the eloquent silence of the hills, with the companionship of the cattle.

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Patiently all waited until evening brought the signal for the breaking up of the gathering. Instantly, each man with his beast moved from the field ; the street was a welter of animals. I saw them hustling there, heard the shouting, then watched them break one from the other, and move by paths unknown, to remote farms. As long as light lasted I watched them spreading like a fan over the hills, and no man looked back.

The last to go was the Highland bull. He went alone, a king, one attendant by his side, unapproachable, independent, symbol of the greater loneliness beyond. Then dusk took the colour from the heather, hid the hills, and folded itself about the village. A light shone from one of the cottages. Within some one was singing, 'Gin I were where Gadie rins,' and in each verse the refrain was repeated three times.

‘It is Well.’

AS I walked towards the Cathedral, a troop of girls, short-skirted, carrying hockey-sticks, passed me on their way to the meadows. On each head was a scarlet cap.

It was the hour for service ; but from my seat I could not see those who officiated. A voice rolling through the aisles, and the responses of the choir, were what I heard. I saw the soft colour that gleamed through the high rose window, the six lighted candles that flickered above the pulpit, and beyond, against the north door, the huddle of white monuments to the memory of the successful dead. Those pretentious memorials, with their life-size figures and complimentary angels, are not attractive at close quarters ; but from where I sat they composed into a great indistinguishable mass of white, not without dignity. Details were gone. The lifted hands, the upraised heads, still cried aloud of success ; but over all had passed the

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reconciling hand of death. Still and very white they looked in the dim light.

These men died with *Finis!* written at the foot of the page. 'We have deserved this' is stamped on every gesture of their carven figures. On the other side of the Cathedral, in the shadow, so close to me that I could almost touch it, was a monument that is nameless. Looking up, I could just see the slender hands of the recumbent figure, palm touching palm in prayer, and beneath, on either side, two kneeling men in bronze. Their heads are bowed; their eyes are on the ground; and some chance has given to the face of one a likeness to a certain writer, and to the other a likeness to a certain musician.

To each, on a day, failure came. One accepted defeat, saying, 'It is well'; the other laughed at his failure, began again, and passed on to greater triumphs. Episodes in their lives came back to me that afternoon so vividly that when the preacher stepped into the pulpit I heard no more than the text: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins

'It is Well'

be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' One, the writer, had set his heart upon a certain subject—'to revise that prodigious range of literature, patristic and classical, of which Erasmus was the editor.' He worked for ten years, then abstained for twenty-five. Other duties claimed his attention. A time came when he felt a longing to resume his task. It was not to be—owing to a dispute in his congregation 'about the hymn - book' that robbed him of rest and peace. 'So I restored the eleven tall folios to the shelf and tied up the memoranda. . . . It is well.'

The other kneeling figure suggests the brooding forehead and deep eyes of Beethoven, and recalls a slight but significant episode in his musical life. He was composing his Symphony No. 8 in F, and—I quote from an analytical examination of the symphony—'He is commencing the Coda as usual with a passage similar to the beginning of the working-out, when all at once the absurdity of so doing seems to strike him. He gives two hearty laughs

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(in the Basses), makes a pause, and goes off with an entirely fresh idea.'

The congregation moved, and I walked with them, past the huddle of white monuments towards the door. The hockey team was returning from the meadows. The flushed faces of the girls matched their scarlet caps.

Confidence.

I WOUND up my watch, noticed that the hour was near midnight, and glanced significantly at the beds that the guard had prepared ; but my companion who had joined the train at Dijon still talked. This stranger had come through from some outlying part of France ; he sat on the edge of the couch ; his fur rug was tucked round his knees, his voice came from the depths of his fur coat. He talked easily, as those do who have been profoundly moved, and remember.

‘I can hardly believe it only happened this afternoon,’ he said. ‘I was sitting in my bedroom writing, vaguely thinking that if it got much darker I should have to light up. I put on my glasses ; then the lightning caught the metal, blazed about my eyes, and I was blind—stone blind. I sat quite still, trying to realise it, looking ahead through the years, and wondering if I should ever get used to not wanting to live. It was the grimmest

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hour of my life. Then suddenly I began to see. The glimmer grew brighter, and slowly my sight returned. I used to think I knew what happiness meant ; but I didn't. To think that you are blind : then to begin to see ! That's happiness ! Nobody else in the world can have known happiness as I knew it this afternoon. Why doesn't it last ? How do people make it last ? '

Unable to answer his question, I climbed into my bunk and placed my head upon the pillow ; but he would not let the subject rest. On he rambled :—

'I once knew a man whose happiness lasted all day, and every day. He was a Roman Catholic priest who had a tiny flock, mostly Irish visitors, up in a mountain health-resort. He dressed in broadcloth and wore snow boots ; he was always busy and smiling, and he played the organ, I remember. He would come cheerfully into the hotel, late at night, when we were all yawning, shake the snow off him, and go off to sit with one of the servants who was ill ; then out again through the snow to his lodging. He was always smiling.

Confidence

I suppose he saw very clearly. Perhaps he never thought about being happy. I don't know. When he had nothing else to do he searched for Alpine flowers, and made quite a fine collection of them. Once he asked me to call and see him. His study was a narrow room like a corridor, with windows all down the weather side. There were five glass frames on the wall containing his collection of Alpine flowers. In this corridor-room there was a press, too, and cocoa-nut matting on the floor. I wondered how he could sit there without a fire. Outside there was nothing but snow, white fields of it running down ever so far. "It's a bitter outlook," I said. "But you should see it in the spring," he answered—"one mass of narcissi." Why did he look so happy when he spoke?'

My companion removed his glasses, and examined them. 'Thought I was blind: then began to see. It's upset me, I suppose, or why should I mix up my happiness with that little priest's happiness! Fields of narcissi! They're not as white as snow.'

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He tumbled into bed, then raised himself on his elbow to draw the shade over the lamp. The glass was half-darkened when he paused. 'They're not the same kind of happiness. Mine comes to an end like this light, when I cover it up with a black shade. So! But his never stops. I believe he smiles when he's asleep.'

Awakening.

THE village children made our audience. They stared open-mouthed at the yacht that lay alongside the primitive quay, chattering in their unknown tongue, while we asked ourselves the question—shall we try to cross the mere to-night ?

As we debated a barge laden with peat slowly passed us. It was one of those family affairs owned by the man who had brought his wife to this roving home years before ; the children born to them had grown up amphibious. House and home glided away from us, the man and an elder daughter quanting, the wife at the tiller, and two children on the towing path straining at the line. Idly we watched them pass, and still waited ; for what was time to us ? As well be here as anywhere : here where the sun idealised the red roofs, and the water mirrored the reflections of the windmill's still sails. Why proceed ? Why wake from the dream ? Perhaps we should have stayed the night there, but that

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a little wind sprang up, blowing towards the mere, just favouring us enough to fill the sails. We left the village and moved on like some great white bird flapping lazily in the void. The faces of the children became blurred : we were alone in the flat green lands, home of solitary storks and whirling watermills.

The breeze favoured us no longer when we passed out into the mere : then began the attempt to make the passage against a head wind. In long tacks from side to side we progressed slowly towards the spire that marked the mouth of the river, through which we must sail to find our resting-place for the night. The moon came up, and still we crept on noiselessly, for there was no sound but the vicious tugging of the ropes on the pulleys, and the flapping of the sails as we tacked ; nothing to be seen but stars and moon, and tantalising lights ahead. Silently we sailed on, the captain at the tiller, the mate clinging to the shrouds, and peering out into the darkness. Although no word was spoken, what they knew communicated itself to us :

Awakening

we had lost our bearings : even their keen eyes were unable to recognise among the twinkling lights those which marked the entrance to the river. Some whispered words, a peering into the darkness, an assent, and we dropped anchor to wait for the morning.

We were not far from the shore, for I could see strange shapes, that might be human habitations, and might be the portentous creations that come in dreams,—amorphous shapes, uncanny, and unrealised, that start fears of the strange and the unknown. Was it land that we saw, or only a dream country that would pass away with the light? As I lay in my bunk and listened to the wash of the waves against the sides of the vessel, I saw again those mysterious shapes, and they kept with me through the night in dreams.

Rumbling and shouts overhead awakened me. When I went on deck, lo! in the clear light of a summer dawn all that in the darkness had seemed mysterious and fearful had become plain and alluringly simple. We were close to the shore. The shapes

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of the night were—a farmstead, a haystack, and an outlying barn. A peasant was working in a field; the smoke went up from the farmstead chimney; and yonder was the river widening into the land, a handspan below the green meadows.

The wind filled our sails, the sun sparkled on the water, as we glided into the river, and swept onwards to the village. There, against the quay, was the family barge, already beginning to unload her peat. Slow and ungainly, but an old traveller in those waters, she had gone straight to her haven, knowing the course, while we ——. Still we had experienced what they had missed : to us had been given the joy of awakening, of learning once more how illusory are night fears when the dawn comes.

A Frenchman.

HE was a noticeable man, although at first I hardly noticed him. By the end of the week, the regularity of his habits, and his way of always idling at a fixed hour, drew him into the spectacle of my life. I looked for him when the clock struck ten, waiting to see the tall, grey-clad figure emerge from beneath the trees at the end of the Quai D'Orsay, cross the bridge, and stroll down the Quai Voltaire. At the statue he would turn : then began the purpose of his walk. On the outward journey he paced in the middle of the pavement, sniffing the air, glancing at the river, frowning at the horrid din of the electric cars ; he was then the man of affairs. On the homeward journey he became the bibliophile. I do not believe that there was a single box of old books on the quai wall that he did not investigate each morning. He treated the thumbled paper volumes reverently, and sometimes he bought a book. His face, small and

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well-shaped, was pale with that seasoned pallor that sun and wind cannot mark, and little lines puckered from the eyes and mouth. He wore a small iron-grey imperial beard and moustache, and from behind his pince-nez a pair of shrewd, observant eyes peered out upon the world. Neat and methodical in his habits, clear and logical in his mind, he seemed a type of the best kind of Frenchman, enjoying the pageant of life, never excited, never morbid, taking things at their true worth, not offended by views he could not accept, merely acknowledging urbanely that they were different from his own.

I purposed to make his acquaintance—and succeeded. There was a block of vehicles on the Pont Royal; and, it not being his way to dodge under the horses' heads, he waited patiently on the kerb till he could cross, and I stood by his side. Then happened one of those small incidents that photograph themselves on the mind. Darting across the road (he did not wait) was a student from the South—a picturesque figure. A sombrero was

A Frenchman

perched on his rich black hair : he had pale, aquiline features and dark eyes, and he was dressed in corded velvet, open at the front, showing an unstarched linen shirt, surmounted by a flowing black neck-tie. A party of English travellers—three women and a man—caught sight of him, and all turned to stare, not rudely, but inquisitively. The student observed their glances, and—raised his hat.

My Frenchman smiled with pleasure, our eyes met, and we talked of courtesy : then of England. He was conversant with our literature, our art, our social life, and our newspapers. He had been reading in a London journal of a proposal to begin a School of the Humanities at London University ; and for a quarter of an hour that sunny morning we paced up and down the Tuileries gardens, he advocating, with gentle insistence, that the need of our time was for the teaching of the Humanities. The day, the surroundings, were in accord with his plea. Under the trees where we walked was the man who had chosen birds as his companions. Numbers collected about

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him : he knew them all, and when he called one by the name he had given to it, saying, 'Gabrielle come,' it would perch on his finger and eat from his hand.

We paced to and fro while this quiet Frenchman, ripe, and not in the least desirous to be plucked from the life he had learned to understand so well, dreamed aloud to a stranger of a wider outlook on life, of a larger self for the individual. The sun shone, the friend of birds fed his flock, around us outstretched the most stimulating city in the world : then, having met for a little while, we parted. My eyes followed that erect, wise figure, until I lost it behind Fremiet's shining Joan of Arc.

Stars and a Ship.

IT was late in the evening in an hotel at Venice, and the tired sight-seers were gathered in the withdrawing-rooms that opened from the hall, chattering and reading American and English newspapers. The talk—such as you may hear any evening in London or New York, slight, trivial, pleasant—was at its loudest when the Sailor came quietly through the swing doors. About him was the air of one who had passed his life under wide skies, in the company of his own simple thoughts. His clear eyes looked out from his bronzed face in search of his friends. From the corner of the room to which they welcomed him came his deep voice, giving forth sonorously, in lulls of the general conversation, startling fragments of his adventures during the last voyage. Into that upholstered room leaked something of the wonder of the world. By degrees the sight-seers retired, until at length nobody was left but the Sailor and his friends.

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As the night wore on he talked more freely, and when one asked him what sights had made most impression on him during the disastrous voyage, he answered, 'The stars and a ship. As I have said, we were on the island three weeks before we were rescued. It was flat, and at night, lying awake, stretched on my back, I felt there was nothing in the whole world but the great Southern sky blazing with stars, and myself. I had always cared about astronomy, and, as I lay there night after night, bits of knowledge, half-forgotten, came back to me, and, piecing them together, I brooded myself into that immensity till I seemed to understand. I realised with extraordinary vividness the procession of the Great Nebula in Orion across the firmament. And in the middle of that stupendous fire-mist was the great multiple star. I saw, I think, some of the faint stars, so remote that if the tidings of the first Christmas at Bethlehem could have been flashed by telegraph to them the message would still be travelling through space. Then I gazed at the

Stars and a Ship

nearest star, Alpha Centauri, visible in those latitudes, and I saw the two great suns of which it is composed slowly revolving round each other, doing their part in the stupendous movement of the heavenly worlds in a plan that has been unchanged since the beginning of things. Nothing else seemed worth doing, but to lie there at night and dream of the evolution of those bodies eternally obeying the will of the Creator.

‘It was in the very early morning that the ship which rescued us came. It was light ; there were no stars ; the sea was a great desolate waste, as if man had never done anything to disturb the early simplicity of the world as it looked when ready for man. I was staring idly out at the sea when suddenly I heard a whistle, and from behind the headland shot out a big steamer. The apparition was so sudden that I could not signal. Action was impossible in the thought of all that vessel meant. Out of the brown earth, with nothing but his own hands to help him, man dug and made for his use every appliance, every luxury that

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that vessel contained. Steam, the compass, lighting, books, foods, clothes—everything had been found and fashioned by him with no help but his own brains and hands. It seemed so wonderful that I said to myself——'

'Yes?'

'I hardly like to say it here, but that steamer alone on the sea put it into my head. I thought the Creator must be a little astonished at all the things man has grubbed out of the old brown earth.'

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The Meaning.

THROUGH the open window came the sound of lashing waves on the beach, and the rush of wind; but those in the room were hardly conscious of nature's noises. Outside, the elements raged; within, the few, come together for a little while, were united in spirit, removed from external things. It was Schubert this time; and he who played, when he had finished one composition, waited a minute in the silence, of which the sea and the wind were paradoxically part, then touched the notes enquiringly again.

The faint green walls of the room, over which the eye could roam and rest, were in keeping with the art that cannot be explained in words, which calls from the depths of being emotions that march and soar with the music, and when it ceases stop with the suddenness of a parting.

The owner of this room who played Schubert that afternoon had broken the simplicity of the walls at two points—no more.

Life's Lesser Moods

Here stood a dull green cast, like old bronze, of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, which had been pieced together to make a treasure of the Louvre. Headless, maimed, yet still instinct with the joy of life, you see her alighting on the prow of the vessel, swiftly bringing the news of victory to the shores of Greece. The wind blows back her garments, the salt sea air flies past her, victory is in her eyes, triumph in every line of her on-rushing figure. So she stands, the embodiment of young joy, fixed in that supreme moment, silent, but eternally eloquent, unassailable by time or her ancient companions, the sea and the wind, still raging outside.

On the other wall was a photograph of a picture of music, an art hardly known to the sculptor of the Victory. In the recess of a dimly-lighted studio, their faces hidden, two men are playing—the elder the violin, the younger the piano. You can feel the music ; you can feel the silence of the five listeners and the emotions that possess them. One buries his face in his hands ; another stares like a somnam-

The Meaning

bulist, his fingers clasped about his knees, his eyes peering into veiled adventures of the soul ; a third gazes helplessly at the violinist—hypnotised ; the eyes of the fourth are on the ground ; the fifth is a woman. And above their heads—white, calm, content—is the death-mask of Beethoven.

Such was the room by the sea where Schubert was being played—the faint green walls, the Winged Victory, and that wordless picture of music brooding on immortal things. He who was playing Schubert stopped. One of the company broke the silence, and bending towards him whispered : ‘ What does it mean ? ’

He played the piece over again ; then said, ‘ That is what it means.’

Fear and Joy.

THE man's nervousness communicated itself to me. The heavy, motionless air heralding the thunderstorm affected him painfully, as if he feared the something that threatened him ; when the lightning forked across the night sky he threw up his head and chewed his lips. In appearance he was not an apprehensive man. Big, burly, bearded, he looked like one who could hold his own in any combat, real or imaginary. His hands were hard and huge as a blacksmith's ; but they were always, as it were, working, trying to grasp, handle, knead, and polish something that was not there.

It was the agitated hands that first told me the man was suffering acutely from the oppression of the night. He was away from his right environment : that was plain. Inaction tormented him ; thought or reflection could not ease the internal disquietude that the portentous atmospheric conditions of the night had kindled in him. He

Fear and Joy

needed his own accustomed method of alleviation ; but what that was I could not guess. And his hands continued to grasp and knead inpalpable things. Suddenly he turned to me and said, 'We go home the same way, I hope ?' There was fear in his eyes.

The night was black when we started ; but the right-of-way path across the slushy fields had been newly gravelled, and it was not difficult to follow that spectral, yellow, climbing trail. This man, burly and big-chested, clung to my arm like a child, muttering, 'The corner, the corner ! It will be all right when we have passed the corner.' 'Why ?' I asked at length. 'You can see the light in my room when we have passed the corner,' he answered. 'I always keep the lamp burning. It shines through the holland blind across the common.'

At the corner the wind blew us off the yellow path. We stumbled together, he dragging so heavily on my arm, and the wind so fiercely contesting the attempts we made to stagger from the mire, that I thought

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we should never recover the path. Once on it again, we set ourselves to the corner, turned it, and there, right before us, across the common, shone the lighted window.

The man ran ; I pursued. He vaulted the gate, and disappeared within the cottage. For some seconds I fumbled with the lock ; then followed him indoors. He was not in the parlour where the lamp stood ; but I heard him singing somewhere at the back. I followed the voice across a paved yard to a large outhouse, brilliantly illuminated. It was the studio of a sculptor, craftsman, worker in metal. On a deal table stood a great, gleaming centre-piece. From the middle of the bowl sprang a slender tree-like erection of bright silver, broken half-way by the figures of four ragged mariners listening, and at the summit was a figure of Pan—goat-footed, smiling, exultant—protected by a group of symbolical woodland creatures half-concealed, half-emerging from foliage.

The man broke off in his song, and cried to me over his shoulder : ‘ You know the legend—in Plutarch—eh ? ’ Then he sang

Fear and Joy

again, and all the while his hands were polishing the silver. Over the shiny surfaces, over every nook and cranny, passed the palms of his hands with swift, affectionate movements, polishing and re-polishing. Those nimble, nervous movements on the gleaming metal hypnotised me, and I watched him until dawn broke into the room, and fought silently for mastery with the lamp-light.

He was a changed man. Activity, the occupation of his hands, had exorcised the fear that brooding through the night had wrought in him. When his arms dropped with fatigue, he would dip a brush into a bottle of benzine, and wash the faces of marble busts with the liquid. Then, singing again, he would return impetuously to the polishing : a vision of joy in work, in life, in himself.

Above his head shone the figure of Pan—goat-footed, smiling, exultant.



The Spell.

‘**Y**OU see,’ he said, ‘I hold that the keenest pleasures come from the imagination, and those pleasures never pall. Friendship is good, love is good ; but the imagination must work alone, and it never works so delicately as in a sudden change of environment. The thought of loneliness is repelling ; but face it and there is great reward.’

‘You put this into practice?’ I asked.

‘Occasionally. Last week, when I found that mankind in bulk was deadening me, and making everything seem grey and stupid, I went off to a desolate place on the coast. There were miles of wet sand beneath a grey dripping sky ; on the shore stood fishermen’s cottages ; all the rest was sea, white-crested, desolate, indefinitely lonely. Not a ship was in sight ; and in those miles of sand I saw but one human being, a man, a black speck, far away across pools of water, digging holes in the sand, and running with a line from one hole to another.

The Spell

‘No : I couldn’t sleep that night ; but it was not the feverish sleeplessness that London brings, changing molehills into mountains. It was rather the wakefulness of immensity. I understood. I rejoiced. As I lay in bed listening to the roar of the sea, my perceptions broadened, felt their way through infinity—miles of sand, sky, ocean—and home was there. Man was the stranger : man I did not want : to go on for ever in that waking dream of conscious union with infinity seemed the only object of existence. To go back to the world was to return to prison. The thought of catching the early train to London was torture.

‘But when some one knocked at my bedroom door at half-past six the spell was not broken. It was quite dark : the sea still moaned : I was still alone. Outside in the wet streets I was still alone, for the sleepy servant who emerged from the depths of the building to show me the way to the station did not speak. He shuffled by my side in slippers, and as he walked the rain trickled into his slippers

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and squelched as he put his feet down. Here and there in the top windows of the houses there was a light; but we met nobody, either in the streets or when the houses straggled off one by one, and we plodded up a hill. On the top he pointed to a building in the valley, and left me. That building was dark. The gates were locked. I waited, the spell still unbroken, but dreading the moment when the world would catch me again. A light came swinging out of the darkness; a porter looked sleepily at me, and then unlocked the gate. I was the only passenger in the train. We crawled through the damp mist which rose from the valley, and when we stopped at the first station I heard the moan of the sea. It could not be far distant; but that clinging mist hid everything, even the face of the guard. I heard somebody say to him, "Another miserable Sunday, Joe," and his answer, "It is that"; but those voices coming out of the impenetrable mist did not break the spell. The men were figures in a dream—voices only.

‘ We moved slowly forward, and the rain

The Spell

grew heavier. I sat quite still, exulting in the last moments of loneliness, for at the next station I would have to change. When the train stopped, a figure loomed before the carriage door, and a voice said : " You can sit in the dry till the main line train comes."

'It may have been five minutes, it may have been an hour, when with a roar, a splutter of steam, and an awful grind of brakes, the London express drew up at the platform. Every compartment was brilliantly lighted. Faces stared from the steaming windows.

'The world had come out of the mist to grip me again.'

The Topiarius.

IT was plain I had lost my way. That last gallop across the common had brought me out into a wooded country of sandy roads and silence. I scanned the landscape for the signs of smoke curling up in the evening air ; but saw only the trees against the setting sun, a squirrel scurrying along a branch, and the gleam of a bunch of rhododendrons that the late storm had blown into the road. Michael pretended to shy at the flowers ; but it was only a feint. He, like myself, was under the influence of the end of day in that corner of rural England. I threw the reins over his neck and dreamed. Some time later Michael stopped at a gate that admitted to a wood, and looked enviously, it seemed to me, along the forest track of green turf that wound beneath the trees. 'So be it,' I said, unlatched the gate, and Michael pushed it open with his broad shoulders. A touch of the heel and he gathered him-

The Topiarius

self for a gallop, I bending over his neck to avoid being caught up in the branches as Absalom was. Thus we sped through the air for a mile or more, until the wood gave place to a lane with trimmed hedges on either side. There Michael stopped ; and I, looking over the hedge, saw, what I never expected to see in this world, a Topiarius, in the flesh.

He was very old, of course. His smock frock had once been white, and on his head he wore a bowler hat that, half a century ago, may also have been white. In his right hand he held a huge pair of shears, and with infinite patience he was trimming a small yew tree into the shape of a peacock. What a piece of good fortune ! I, quite undeserving, had by the merest chance discovered a man engaged upon topiary work. I was probably the only person in all England who at that moment enjoyed an uninterrupted view of (to use Sir Walter Scott's phrase) 'a topiarian artist.' In that formal garden behind the hedge there were many pertinent examples of the topiarian art, or 'verdant

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sculpture,' as the schoolmen term it. Not a tree, not a shrub, had been allowed to follow its natural bent. This inarticulate old gentleman with the shears, the world forgetting, by the world forgot, had trimmed and cut trees, shrubs, arbours, hedges into the similitude of animals, buildings, pyramids, columns, globes, and fish. Was this Survival content? I think so. It was love that directed his shears to clip that peacock's tail so finically. If he had a little son, he would make him a topiarius, not a chauffeur. Such as he do not move with the times.

Gazing at the Topiarius I went back in memory to a schoolroom on a hot day in the early 'seventies. We had partaken at midday dinner of a dish called toad-in-the-hole, and it was still early in the afternoon. Through the open windows of the schoolroom came the drone of bees and the odour of tan with which the playground was strewn, and before me was a book with a picture of the Topiarius at work. Poor sleepy scholar! Little did you think that a lifetime later you would be looking at him over a

The Topiarius

hedge, and remembering that 'the Topiarius was an ancient figure known in the Rome of the Cæsars'; that he worked in 'alleys of yew and pleached arbours of hornbeam'; and that Bacon said of 'topiarian features' — 'They be but toys; you may see as good sights many times in tarts.'

How foolish it seemed to remember this useless knowledge, and to have such a hazy idea of Mr. Chamberlain's fiscal policy. I almost envied Michael's detachment: he was nibbling irregular patterns out of the hedge, quite oblivious of the Topiarius who was about to give the finishing touches to the peacock's tail. I made that indescribable noise in the back of my throat which a horse understands, and muttered the word 'Sugar.' He bore me away. As we passed the last of the topiarian features I waved to the Topiarius; but he did not raise his head.

Man and Woman.

THE novelist was modest, diligent, and gifted ; a receptive man ; a listener, rarely a talker. His men and women are always deftly realised. One day he told me that he found nothing so interesting as the study of antipathetic characters on one another.

‘Here are two,’ I said, ‘a Man and a Woman. Make a story out of them. Call the first “The Torpedo Man.”’

‘She slipped into the bay at dawn and anchored, her guns pointing at our church tower. There was no other ship in sight. The hurricane kept her company. A child could have told she was a battleship. There was nothing buoyant or attractive about her. She didn’t ride the waves : she crouched down in them, tense, eager as an animal ready to spring — a beast of abundant power, well-controlled : a brute thing, intensely alive, that could send a torpedo two miles in four minutes, and be scudding away through the open sea before

Man and Woman

the smoke had cleared from the destroyed. She made herself felt all day. Her menace rasped our nerves. We watched her from the cliffs—this ugly petrel of war. She was horribly quiet. No one moved on her colourless decks.

‘At sunset a boat put off, and came swiftly to the harbour. We helter-skeltered to meet it. A man swung himself up on to the stone jetty. He had laughing blue eyes and a brown skin, and came with a message to the mayor. His captain solicited the honour of a football match with the village on the next afternoon, and in the evening offered a sing-song for any charity the mayor might name. “Any damn charity will do. Church or chapel, doesn’t matter.” Then he laughed, and said it was ripping weather for ducks.

‘Call the second “The S.A. Face.”

‘The flakes of snow powdered the ’bus driver’s broad back, and the keen wind had made his jolly face ruddier than the cherry. I sat behind him in a corner seat, and as we creaked through the wintry

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streets he made comments on life—"My old 'oman always 'as a onion ready for me after a wet day!" or "Now them Japanese ——" and so on. He was interested in everything he saw from his perch, particularly in the solitary figures of the Salvation Army lasses who, during that self-denial week, stood at their appointed places through all London, gently rattling money-boxes, and suggesting to the passers-by, with a faint smile, that they should give. I counted fourteen of the slim figures in black; and beneath the poke bonnet with its scarlet flash of ribbon a face looked out, often spectacled, usually pale, but always lighted by some interior wisdom or happiness that so many other women and men had missed. I commented on this to the 'bus driver. He ruminated, patting the near horse with the top of the whip. Then he pulled the apron farther up over his chest, and said, "They give up their tea, and jam, and sugar, and pickles; they stand out there all day in the cold; they 'aven't got no pleasures; and they look as jolly as if they

Man and Woman

was just going to a cock-fight. It's a rum go."

'When we drew up at the Goat and Compasses the conductor jerked his thumb towards the public-house, and the driver said, "Same 'ere, Joe." While waiting for the beer he sat staring at the pavement, his brow all puckered. He took the tankard, mechanically blew off the froth; then paused, looking hard at me, and said, "Sometimes I git to think there's a 'eaven after all.'"

'I'll try,' said the novelist.

The Sage.

THE Sage was sitting on the bank just beneath the tree where we had heard the thrush singing the night before I left for London. His thistle-spud was by his side ; his old face was upturned ; he was listening.

The bird stopped his song ; but I, brimming over with the latest thing I had heard in London, eager to talk about it, hardly noticed that the song had ceased. The music that had so excited me that afternoon was still dancing in my head, as it had been dancing through the long train journey, trying to harmonise itself with the swaying of the carriage and the roar through the tunnels. I was longing to talk, and there was something about the Sage's calm but sympathetic impassivity that always loosened the lips. He glanced at me with puckered eyes, shrewdly, but also with a lurk of invitation in them. That was enough.

'It was Brahms,' I began — 'two Hungarian dances by Brahms. They start

The Sage

at a canter, like a horse when his forefeet touch the turf ; they tear through the wind, and drop you down into a garden, where in a moment you are dreaming a wonderful dream, living a year in a minute. And it's music, music all the time, such wild, dancing, wanton music, without beginning, and endless. It makes a gipsy of you : you are wandering through Hungary, dancing and singing as you go : you have been a gipsy for hundreds of years : you are part of the country, fetterless and without a frontier, that is theirs, and you know all the time that underneath the wild songs you are shouting to the pine trees there is a deep even harmony going on that is centuries older than you are, older than the catch you are singing : it is the eternal song of natural life, the song-soul of the country that never changes, the wordless song that musicians hear. And you say to yourself, looking at the flushed faces of the musicians, and the bows of the violins, darting, dancing, sweeping backwards and forwards in a rhythmic movement so quick that the eye cannot follow—you say to yourself with a

catch of the breath—O, will they never stop?

‘You look at the conductor. He is all of a tremble; his head bends forward, his body sways; and in that little baton he holds, which moves like a thing gone mad, all the movement and wildness of the music seems to be caught; that baton and his two gleaming hands hold in hypnotic sway all the fire of temperament, all the glow of enthusiasm that each musician is throwing into his instrument; and sometimes in a flash the two hands come together and shoot out pointing to some musician as if saying—*You!* and in that moment *his* instrument cries out high above all the others. Will they never stop? You look at the audience, hundreds of them, wedged together, standing like marionettes, their bodies swaying, their heads jerking. It isn’t like Wagner’s music, which leads you upwards in tantalising sweeps, giving you a glimpse of the unscalable heights where rest waits; then throws you back, only to seize you again in fresh tantalising sweeps and curves, always drawing near, never attaining, giving you more

The Sage

glorious glimpses of the summit, and then casting you back to earth again, as if you were a sack of potatoes. Brahms, in his Hungarian dances, never does that. He springs everything on you in a rush, takes you by the hair, flings you out into the whirlwind, gives you a few minutes of delirious joy ; and just when you think you can't bear any more the end comes suddenly : you are clay again, spent—miserable.'

I paused. The Sage looked at me and said sternly, ‘“ Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions.” When that bird sings his evening song, 'tis the same song as was sung two thousand years ago. Ay : 'twill be the same song two thousand years hence. Your Mister Brahms leaves you miserable, you say. That bird tells me things that make me want to live, and not afraid to die.'

The Child.

YOU know the effect of one lighted window in a dark house. When that house is a cottage, clinging alone to the hillside, and you see the light at night-time from a wood below—when the inmate of the lighted room is a young, pale girl who is playing a violoncello, and the window is open, and there is nothing abroad but her music, the soft summer air, and yourself—such a sight remains. I saw her, and heard her, many times by night and by day. There was no need to hide or crouch; for her eyes, like her slight body, were weak, and everything beyond the garden fence was dim to Lizzie. Why this child of peasants should have had the gift of music, or why the offspring of so sturdy a couple should have been doomed to an early death from curvature of the spine, was inexplicable. Three days a week, when she was strong enough, the carrier jolted her into Marketbourne, where she had lessons at the conservatoire. Colonel

The Child

Ward, Jonathan's employer, saw to the fees, and he it was who, when she became too weak to make the journey, gave her the violoncello.

It was Colonel Ward's sister who carried Lizzie off one day to a Harley Street oculist, who interested himself more than usual in the case, and provided her with glasses which, almost as if by a miracle, restored her sight. She wore the glasses for a week, and then discarded them. When I upbraided her, she answered: 'They make me see everything so clearly. I don't want to see things clearly. The flowers and the trees are not nearly so beautiful as they were when I saw them through a mist. The gentleman was very kind to give me the glasses; but I want him to take them back.' She never wore them again. When I saw her playing at the open window, looking out on three counties as she played, her eyes were unprotected. It was Schumann in those latter days, always Schumann, and nearly always the little 'Schlummerlied.' Her parents listened and wondered, with the inarticu-

Life's Lesser Moods

late wonder of the very poor. They treated her as if she were a princess or an angel ; but they never spoke to me of Lizzie.

When she died her father threw himself on his knees by the bedside, and whispered, 'God's will be done !' It was terrible to hear him cry. The mother, looking as white and cold as a statue, gave the cottage a superfluous autumn cleaning. Two days later Jonathan tramped into Marketbourne, and returned with his pockets stuffed with cheap laces and odds and ends of muslin and chiffon. 'All soft things,' he said, as he placed them gently into the coffin. 'Her soft flesh mustn't be hurt.' The woman stared at him, left the room without a word, and began to shake out the mats in the yard. When the men in black came down the steps she told them to wait, laid the mats tidily in their places, and then returned to the chamber. 'Jonathan,' she said, jerking her head to the door, 'the onions has gone musty. There's a chance of your getting no supper to-night.' He looked dazed, but did not move. She

The Child

went up to him, took his arm, and led him gently to the door. 'I want you,' she said, 'to let me be alone with the bairn before—before the men come!' That was nineteen years ago.

The Parents.

IT was a tiny cottage in which Jonathan and his wife lived ; but three counties could be seen from the porch. Overhead you might watch the weather in the making ; just beneath was an orchard. In that cottage Jonathan's wife spent her days. He was a wanderer, she was a stay-at-home. A thin, restless woman, never idle, she was one of those housewives who are always cooking something over a fire, or carrying a pail or a platter between the yard and the house. She never shared in the talks between Jonathan and myself ; she regarded them, I am sure, merely as another of man's ways of wasting time. Sometimes I wondered vaguely what were her thoughts, what was her view of life. Once, many years ago, her emotions had been deeply stirred : that I knew. There was the locked room in the cottage to remind me. A housewife, with but three rooms to control, does not renounce one of them, save under some strong compulsion.

The Parents

Lizzie's bedroom, with its music-stand, its violoncello, its faded articles of attire, its books, was unchanged since the day she died. It was dusted every morning—that was all. We never spoke of her.

For his supper Jonathan liked a steaming Spanish onion, with a piece of bread and a glass of ale. That was the hour when we talked about books—or, rather, I talked, and he made comments. Indeed, it was for the sake of those comments that I willingly exchanged the hearth of my own cottage for his. Sometimes I read a review aloud. He would sit in the chimney corner, staring straight at me with those deep-set eyes, smoking placidly, while his wife bustled to and fro, making no remark beyond the peremptory command when the onion was dished from the pot and placed steaming on his plate, 'Now, then, come and sit up.' Jonathan obeyed, hungry or not, while I continued to read. He could not, or would not, assimilate much at a time; when some passage moved him to speak, he would put down his fork, and speak. On the evening of which I am writing



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the fork was placed on the table when he had taken but a few mouthfuls. The onion became cold and flaccid. I had been reading this passage: 'Tennyson, more and more as life advanced, seems to have been dominated by the horror of the thought of losing individuality at death.' There Jonathan stopped me. In the silence the tick of the clock seemed very loud. I was conscious that the woman was standing behind my chair. I turned. She was looking at her husband.

Jonathan did not speak. In those few minutes of pregnant silence I knew that I was near to the heart of things. Authority, tradition, clerical influence, the contagious sympathy of a common belief, had no hold on this old man and woman, with the soil beneath, the sky above, and nothing to draw upon but their own simple wisdom. . . . Slowly and sadly Jonathan shook his head. The woman rested herself on the edge of the table, examined her bruised hands, and said, 'Nor I, Jonathan.'

Then (it all happened in a second) they both glanced towards the closed door, and

The Parents

stared hard at it. A change came over them. Jonathan did not move ; but the woman rushed at him, flung her skinny arms about his neck, and sobbed, ' Yes, dear, yes ! '

A Citizen.

OUT of the past his life comes to me rounded and complete, and I pause to offer my tribute.

A little in fear of him I always stood ; for he was the head of the family, an Olympian, masterful, holding the keys, and, in a child's eyes, wrapped in a mantle of aloofness that within his own doors was rarely discarded. Often I wondered how his friends dared to joke with him, and when I heard a grey-beard address him as 'old fellow' the familiarity of it astounded me. He was the omniscient figure who swept from the house to the minute in the morning, and the moment of his return was the beginning of the evening : his departure and home-coming changed the atmosphere of the day. When he rose in the morning the sound of his movements was the call for the household : when he closed his book at night, and frowned at the clock, it was bedtime for all. He never doubted that the master of a house

A Citizen

was an autocrat : we never dreamed of doubting it. Vigorous in his movements, quick-tempered, generous, neither saint nor sinner, methodical, honest and open as a child, well liked, arrogant, emotional at times, hasty, popular, just, something of a hero-worshipper (he revered Gladstone), he stands out now firm-set, clean-featured—a man.

His life — I see it full-circle — was governed and directed by duty. Pleasure might enter into it, and he enjoyed all the good things of the world ; but that clock-work life was pointed and timed to serve his family, his business, his place of worship, and the Radical cause. Personal indulgence, the gratification of whims, was no part of his system, which was to train himself and others to efficiency in the duties of citizenship. After an arduous day's work he would teach his children drawing, and another evening he would attend a French class with his elder daughters. Between forty and fifty he was awarded certificates for proficiency in logic and political economy. With no gusto for

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reading, but in search of information, he would plod sternly through pages of some weighty book at night, making notes, and yawning furtively. A month of leisure time he would give to the preparation of a paper on 'The School Board' or 'Our Indian Empire,' and read it aloud clearly and emphatically at the Institute attached to the chapel, where he stood an impregnable rock to ministers who filed through the years, leaning on him and loving him. And on Sunday afternoons he read a chapter from the Bible with his children, and listened, alert for errors, while they repeated the Lord's Prayer aloud in turn. Morning or evening, when he was in health, he never missed a service at the chapel whose business affairs he governed. There he was married; thence he was carried to his rest.

His business career was orderly and progressive as his private life. He began in some obscure position at sixteen; he worked his way to the highest place; he started for himself with the goodwill and the firm support of all his acquaintances;

A Citizen

and, after many years, he retired, having provided for those who were still dependent upon him. He never failed to record his vote at an election, either in local or in imperial politics ; he used his power and influence for the public good ; and, refusing to enter Parliament, served his cause well and faithfully as president of the district political association. Through all he supported a large family, doing for each his utmost, insisting always on the paramount place of true education in the individual life.

When I see the zest for pleasure that marks these days, the refusal to accept responsibilities, and the petulant protest against irksome tasks, I think of the unindulgent, altruistic life of this good citizen ; and I am amazed—and humbled.

It is good to know that in his latter years Nature was kind, not letting him realise that his active brain hesitated to perform the tasks he set and demanded. He declined gradually, softening and sweetening as he declined. The mastery passed, and he took on again something of the

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wonder and receptivity of a child. He liked to sit in cathedrals, awed and soothed by their vastness, and to listen to simple music. And hope kept him close company until the end. The morrow was always to find him back once more in his purposeful life. The night before he died, when one asked him with foolish fondness how he fared, and bent to hear the faint answer, he said, 'Much better.'

His works follow him : his example endures.

The Way.

NOT by observation has she found the way, but by the spirit within, groping dimly through all the years of her life, and now, in the evening of her days, an articulate companion, unwearying in its consolations. That way is not narrow. In all religions she sees the gleam of the eternal truths that sanctify the immemorial way she has found.

So she has escaped the fear that menaces the oncoming years of so many women—the fear of growing old, of becoming unattractive, of the time when they will be no longer participators, but onlookers. Perhaps that fear never troubled her. An inexplicable wisdom (won, she would say, in some past life of endeavour) gave her the true value of things, sifted intuitively the things that matter from those that are transitory. She has enjoyed her days in her fashion ; but she has never regretted a time that was past, or desired to recover it. The immediate occupation has always

been but a coloured thread in the tapestry. When her daughter was married, she said, 'They are going to be happy, I am sure, but I am so glad it is not my marriage.' Yet her marriage had been quite happy as marriages go ; but it had done its work as part of the great pattern for which life was designed—the fulfilment of the education of the soul. Truly she has put into practice Joubert's maxim that each year should bring its own lamp.

She has no sentimental regrets, and I think few reproaches. All has been lived, all educative ; all that has been thought, felt, or finished must, for better or worse, persist through eternity in obedience to the Will. Perfect peace awaits those who know the Law and do the Will. She has lived a full life centred in her home and her family ; but this, she will say, is her happiest period, because now her spiritual and intellectual faculties are working unhampered. When the cares of a young family engrossed her that was impossible. Those faculties slumbered. For ten years she rarely opened a book ; during ten years

The Way

she did not travel ten miles from home. The claims of the daily routine of life usurped her energies. The lamp of her duty burned clearly; but the light was cold. I remember her as one for whom there was always another task awaiting the one in hand, incessantly occupied, and yet I think living a detached life of thought and growing comprehension which expressed itself fitfully in fragments of conversation I overheard between her and her husband, and with one friend—he, too, a seeker—who came and went, bringing ideas with him.

Still I was not prepared for the glow of spiritual awakening and expansion that came when the particular duties of her life were fulfilled, and she could invite the whisper of the mysteries. Always leaning to free thought, in time even those slight bonds galled, and she gradually evolved for herself the faith that she needed. It is perhaps the most ancient faith of the world. She sees everything human affiliated to it, explained by it, and progressing in willing or unwilling allegiance to its

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behests ; it has open arms for all who will submit themselves, and wait patiently for the command of the Law that is also Love. It has made her old age gracious and sunny, and informed it with a sure hope that can only become more confident as her days on earth grow fewer. Her pleasure in the passing show, her capacity for interesting herself in the lives of others, is stronger than ever ; but all such matters fall into their proper place, neither important nor unimportant, just incidents of this life, one among many progressive lives for the individual, controlled here by the thoughts and actions of former existences, and leading inevitably forward to that state of beatitude when, after so many dark wanderings and mistakes of nature, the individual soul shall no longer be a fellow-worker with the Divine Soul, but indwelling with it.

So to her fragrant and most useful old age this theosophical 'intelligent theory of the universe,' very ancient, yet always fresh, comes with healing on its wings. It breathes, and each morning is a new

The Way

interest, each trouble a new discovery of the way by which the Divine purpose leads. Just now she wrote this to me : 'For myself, I simply progress (so I hope) on the old path, which widens before me as I go along. And you?'

London.

Her Loneliness.

THREE o'clock on a winter morning is her loneliest time. Strange and uncanny she looks at that chill hour, with her dark shops, and spacious thoroughfares bright with the shine of countless lamps. There is menace from her dim side streets ; cats skulk out to hunt in the gutters, and I have seen a figure that should be a man join them in the quest. The gradients and distances of her strangely unfamiliar streets reveal themselves. This lighted, lonely city of the departed is an unknown London. She is without sense of companionship. Nothing remains but her vastness and her loneliness. The remnant of her millions—a straggler here, another there, who hurry through the streets—are alone. A carriage flashes past ; I catch a glimpse of chiffon and furs framing a tired, pretty face. I see the gleam of a policeman's lantern as he passes noiselessly under the shadow of the houses, rattling the handle

London

of a door, flashing his bull's-eye through an unshuttered window ; and in the silence my ears still hold the rumble of the market carts that for hours have been trundling in from distant suburbs. London guarded while London sleeps ! and while she sleeps her food rolling into her markets to be ready for her awakening ! She wakes in darkness on these winter mornings. Long before the unnoticed dawn a million pinched figures have slipped out into the streets, their feet pattering her loneliness away. The lights are extinguished ; the smoke ascends ; London yawns into another day.

On summer mornings there is companionship even in her loneliest hour. Then she knows no real darkness. In the subtle light that heralds the dawn one wayfarer can make a street gay. With the first twitter of the birds London is astir, and she is never so fresh as in that radiant hour. Friendship and companionship stir in those who share her summer dawns. I have stolen upon a group of compositors, just released from their night's labours,

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gathered round a coffee stall, reading the first paper off the press. They have shared with me their coffee and their news while day, in purple and gold, was breaking over London. And looking up to this gleaming sky I have heard the voice of the bleak winter dawn cry from her loneliness :

Once, O wonder ! once from the ashes of my heart
Arose a blossom.

Her Littleness.

FROM her borders, somewhere in the beyond, stretch fields and green hills ; on the summit of one of those hills I stood looking down upon her. I saw the last new road of her outermost suburb cutting into her last remaining field. Beyond, smouldering in the plain, I saw that incalculable thing we call London beginning the working day. All her activities—her greed, her passions, her despair—were under that huge, amorphous blur. There was no sign of individual life, not even the flash of a bird's wing, in all the great creature that had smudged itself over nature, put the print

London

of its finger on you and me, and over all the world. At that moment millions were hastening into her. Across commons, through lanes, down roads and streets, men were hurrying to railway stations, crowding into cars, swarming on foot through all her avenues. Of these millions how infinitesimal is the knowledge any of them have of her. Each knows his tiny corner where work or pleasure calls him ; but London herself is as unfamiliar to him as the steppes of Russia. Consider the life of the small householder. At a fixed hour every morning he sets out, one unit of a long, black-coated file, to catch an appointed train. He walks through the same streets every day ; he returns by the same shops in the evening. He accepts London ; he would not live away from her ; but his London is only the little London of his beat. Hints of her mighty life come to him through his newspaper—murders, fires, the making of laws, chronicles of the fashionable world, but it is all disembodied, paper experience, remote as the Empire. It is her littleness that is his life—the little journey to his

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office ; the train that takes him back in the evening ; his little circle of friends ; the little delicacy of fruit or fish that he carries home once a week to his little home in the suburbs. That is his London. It is for him that London grows vaster every year, pushing muddy little roads through the fields, destroying venerable outlying mansions, and running up ten little houses on each site. It is for him, for this little black-coated, interdicted unit—who is London.

Her Magic.

THERE are times to hate her : on those airless August evenings when the parched wood pavement seethes with odours ; when her mile-long block of traffic disorganises your parcelled time ; when the ugly rush for the public conveyances on wet nights fills you with shame for humanity, and annoyance that you are left behind ; when the longing to escape from her becomes your strongest passion. Nevertheless, there is one thing that equals the joy of

London

leaving her. That is the excitement of return. No other place produces the same emotional and intellectual excitement. Her magic is due not to her past, not to the sense that her ground is hallowed, but to the infection of her rushing multifarious life. In her is the best and the worst—the glamour of all possibilities. To be alone in the country is to be conscious of an element of sadness—the consolations of Nature are distant. To be alone in London is to feel the inspiration of her near-beating, vivid present. Who has not felt the intellectual magic of London? Who has not thrilled to her emotional magic? To me it comes oftenest by the river on autumn days, late in the afternoon,—any part of the river from the Pool to Chelsea,—in the skies, the reflections, the beauty of the buildings on her winding banks, and the passing of the river craft. It comes, too, in the brick-dust sunsets flaring above Oxford Street, and from the blue pools at twilight that an April rain-storm leaves on the space that opens around Hyde Park Corner.

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Her magic is only for the solitary seeker. Speak of it, even to a friend, and it is gone.

Her Terror.

SOME feel an unreasoning terror of her undercurrent of lawless life, which could (so easily) break over the barrier that the moral force of government imposes. A puff at the smouldering fires and they leap into flame. I saw this terror on the face of a jeweller when he ran to his shop-door to see the rioters, a huddle of brandished sticks and arms, sweep into his street. I heard the terror when a shot was fired and stones shattered a plate-glass window. There is the terror of the unexpected in the sudden spectacle of a figure on the roof of an omnibus reeling as the vehicle swerves—the clutch, the fall, the spot of shapeless black in the roadway. There is the terror of crowds closing in closer, closer ; of yourself in the midst with hands clutching the air and face upturned to the dwindling sky ; the terror of the cry of fire in the night. There is the

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terror of that which is heard, but unseen, or dimly realised—furtive groups in lonely thoroughfares who stir and peer as you pass, their footsteps seeming to follow. And there is the menace from old houses in decaying streets. My memory retains a picture of a sodden, ill-lighted street, with dim side-turnings, where dingy buildings totter to decay. And as I passed, from one of these houses came a piercing scream. In that scream all the terror and brutality of submerged London spoke.

Her Silence.

IN silence, her invader, the snow, comes. Once in a thousand mornings London awakes in the act of wondering at the silence. There is no sound in the streets below ; vehicles pass noiselessly ; all is changed. The Town is already battling with the invader. Soon her main thoroughfares are restored to their noise ; then her narrower streets and by-ways. The invader, beaten, discoloured, is shovelled into the river, and only in the suburbs may the

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snow remain undisturbed, fading noiselessly into nothing.

In the silence of her fog landmarks go, and her brisk citizens become wanderers. Torches flare through the pestiferous air. The unnatural silence is broken by hoarse shouts from lips that are not seen, and by the thud and splinter of collisions. Her open spaces are uncharted continents. Once on the borders of one of them a hand shot out from the fog and grabbed at me. I heard nothing, saw nothing of the owner of that hand.

There is the silence of her river, that great traveller who never babbles, who is the first to feel the spring carrying the message in silence through the land. Æons before London was she was here, travelling to her harbour, which is the sea. All London's changes, her tumults, her pomp and her insignificance, she has seen. She is the last refuge of stricken citizens, and the silent custodian of secrets. When London rests, she rests not ; while London laughs and cries, and groans, and shouts she flows on—without haste, without rest,

London

through day and night, through storm and stress—in silence.

Her Side Shows.

THIS in the afternoon : I leaned from the window of a flat on the fifth floor, and saw one of those fearless youths whom the abyss of London produces — pale, peak - faced, alert—flash past on a bicycle. On his bent back swung his satchel of evening papers. I saw him pierce through the traffic, quick as a squirrel, swerve and jump to the ground. His body writhed out from beneath a horse's legs. He mounted and rode away. That glimpse of Death's protruding hand was but an incident of the day to this youth tossed up from the abyss to snatch a living in the streets. Still leaning from the window, I inclined my head to the left, and saw a monastery garden. One of the monks, a comfortable figure, was reading a book beneath a tree. Near him two of his brothers were splashing each other with water from the fountain,

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laughing like children. The bicycle news-boy might have heard their laughter.

This in the evening : I walked westward from Piccadilly, down the vale and up the hill, and as I walked rose-leaf London fluttered past me. It was the height of the season, an early summer evening, the hour when the West drives into the pleasure-heart of London to dine, and to be reminded at the theatre of the unreality of life. The procession of carriages and cabs whirled past. All the women were pretty, for it was a bewitching time, and in the half-light millinery and bright eyes touched the expectant faces to romance. For an hour this 'dream, evanescent as the sparkle of jewels, intangible as a perfume, flitted on, disappeared in the blue twilight, and left me to London and reality.

This at night : When I left the main thoroughfare, and walked northward through the unfrequented streets, I realised at once that something was astir. There was an air of suspense, the reality of additional policemen, a barring of roads to

London

vehicles, a lingering of foot passengers, the presence of mounted men. I waited, and while I wondered a fast-driven carriage, brilliantly lamped, flashed past. Then the streets became normal again. The undertow of preparation that had been streaming beneath the surface for hours to speed that carriage safely on its way from the railway station broke up. The King had passed.

Her Charity.

It was a bitter morning! I had breakfasted and half envied that old man's appetite for his meal of cold meat which he munched with a piece of dry bread. When I returned from my walk through the Embankment gardens he had left his seat. I noticed that he had eaten but two-thirds of the meat. He walked across the road to the parapet of the Embankment, leaned over, and whistled; and as he whistled, from near and far the gulls came flying towards him, eddying and circling over him, perching upon his arms, even upon his outstretched hand,



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while he fed them with morsels of his breakfast. The great birds, a whirl of white, hovered about his figure. In the mist of that winter morning I could have believed that they shaped themselves into the form of a halo round his head.

Her Guests.

IN the daytime the half-circle of sky that shines beneath the arched roof at the far end of one of her great railway-stations is a perpetual invitation to hill and dale; but at midnight all is blank. The country no longer calls, and London has ceased to entertain. Some of the guests are here, waiting for the excursion train that will take them home. Stupid with fatigue, they huddle together for warmth on the seats. Those who are not sleeping are too tired to watch the life that is still going on in this great exit road: the luggage train being loaded with theatrical scenery; the parcels of newspapers being stowed into vans; the pony dragging trucks of goods. They do not see the last of the suburban

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trains depart, and the platform lights disappear as the last carriage glides away ; they do not see the hands of the clock drawing nearer to the half-hour after midnight. They are hardly conscious that they are being roused and hustled to their carriages, a medley of yawning, staggering country-folk whom London has beckoned, charmed, teased, worn-out, and prostrated.

The station closes. London sleeps, and while she sleeps, at this very moment, through all parts of the world, through every district in these islands, her guests are travelling towards her. Trains, ships, vehicles, men on foot, men on horseback, caravans in far lands, are drawing nearer to this Lodestar, this Succubus—London.

Spain.

On the Way.

THE rich English, who follow the sun, and have time to consider their health, were on their way to the Riviera with maids and valets, and I, bound for Spain, began the journey with them. We were twenty minutes out from Dover on a fine morning. The deck was littered with paraphernalia, and in the bracing air hung the odours of *violette de Parme* and eighteen-penny cigars. I sat amid the luxury. On one side of me reclined a hypochondriacal mother and two daughters, one a small child, who was intently nursing a doll clad in a magenta frock. The elder daughter read aloud to her mother in an even, spiritless voice, and the child, who made eager attempts to discuss her doll, was told to be quiet, and ordered to move when a deck chair was brought to accommodate a florid Englishman, robust, but of advanced years, who had seated himself in the middle of the shelter.

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He was encased in a wonderful fur coat. His valet, having placed a table with half a pint of champagne by his side, proceeded to draw over his master's legs a sack made of the skins of some small animal. It reached to his waist. He was armed for the voyage. Civilisation had done what she could for him; yet all the time his valet was tucking him up he was complaining querulously and at wearisome length because nobody had told him that the boat was not turbine engined. It seemed fitting that this magnificent example of Anglo-Saxon wealth, ease, and domination should complain. All who passed glanced at the portentous figure of self-centred success—all but the child, who was still intent rearranging her doll's magenta frock. Half-way across the channel a doubt seemed to creep suddenly into her small brain. She held the doll at arm's length, scrutinised it, and looked around. Her mother was frowning; her sister, still reading. She rested the doll against the furred bosom of the florid Englishman, and, looking at him very gravely, said,

‘Do you think this was quite worth fifteen pence?’

Manners.

THE Sud-express had just left Paris for Madrid and Lisbon, when the Englishman entered the saloon carriage. He glared at the Frenchman, and said angrily, ‘That’s my seat!’ The Frenchman uttered profuse apologies, and retired. I turned to the window, and wished my clothes were not so obviously British. Then we moved into the dining-car for luncheon. The Frenchman entered into conversation with his neighbours, and made himself so agreeable that after luncheon they resumed their animated talk in the saloon. The Englishman did not speak at luncheon, except to bewilder the waiter. At Poitiers the French group were discussing the new Thomy Thiéry rooms at the Louvre; the Englishman had fallen asleep. His mouth was open; ‘Le Rire’ was clutched in his right hand, and his Bradshaw had fallen upon the floor. After Angoulême he

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awoke, and read *The New York Herald*. At seven o'clock he examined his watch, and looked pleased. A pleasant odour of cooking came from the dining-car. The French group had ceased to converse. Art is long ; but dinner is peremptory.

At Bordeaux we waited patiently for the summons, mildly interested in the group of officials who were examining the wheels of the dining-car. They shook their heads, and raised their hands, as if invoking the Deity. Then the dining-car, enveloped in a savoury odour of food, was shunted to a siding, and we steamed away with two baskets of cold French beef and some variegated sausages. Half an hour later the Englishman courteously offered his flask to the Frenchman. It had no cup. The Frenchman, after an incomparable pantomime of protest and gratitude, accepted the offer ; but he did not put the flask to his lips. He held the orifice two inches away, and sprinkled a few drops into his mouth. Some of the liquid fell on his collar. The Englishman laughed in his beard.

Recreation.

LIFE goes leisurely on the Spanish frontier, and an interval of forty minutes between the acts at the Casino Theatre suited the audience. They strolled into the *petits chevaux* hall, lost a little money, laughed and smoked, and wandered back to the opera. To all, in its degree, amusement came, except to the croupiers—strange race. There were ten of them at the tables—eight with rakes, two overseers, and one to start the horses. I watched them, wondering whether, in their leisure, these automata we call croupiers enjoy simple things such as gardening and the prattle of children. Still wondering I passed into the baccarat hall, where double the number of croupiers were raking magnificent sums of money into the Casino purse. At one of the tables a perky American youth was taking the bank for the first time ; but it mattered nothing to the croupiers. Interest had long atrophied in them. They had as little individuality as the money they raked in.

I returned to the *petits chevaux* hall.

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There my interest flickered up. The tables were deserted. Nobody was approaching. The croupiers looked around, seemed astonished, and realised that they were temporarily at leisure. Curious to see how they would employ their leisure, I dissembled behind a pillar. Those who had been sitting stood up; those who had been standing sat down. Then one took from his waistcoat pocket a paper bag of sweets and threw them gravely on the table. Gravely the eight gathered them in, one by one, with their rakes. I went home content. I had witnessed the recreation of croupiers.

Spanish Dignity.

I DID not engage him as guide to the cathedral: he occurred. And before I had finished examining the beaten silver lamp that hung before the altar I divined that he was that rare creature—a guide with intuition and sympathy. He had taste, and he respected my predilections. When he saw that I was interested in this or that Gothic detail, he did not irritate me with

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comments, but rested his little fat body against a pillar or a railing, smiling comprehendingly at my absorption. He had the dignity of Don Quixote ; but his body resembled Sancho Panza's. The girth of it was enormous, and he was not taller than a fourth-form boy ; yet that clown frame harboured all the dignity, reticence, and ancient taste, now alas ! debased, of Spain. He discriminated unerringly between the significant and the rubbish. The scorn with which, waving a chubby hand towards a gaudy modern altar in a side chapel, he uttered the word ' Rococo ' was majestic.

Towards the end of my peregrination he paused in the middle of the transept. Behind him rose the golden stairs down which kings have passed, a towering, shimmering background to his ridiculous figure. In front, poised high in the air, was a flying group in alabaster of S. Christopher, with the Child perched lightly upon his shoulder. The guide stood quite still, the golden stairs framing his squat figure, his double chin tilted in the air, his

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arms folded across his ample bosom. Then, throwing the end of his cloak round his neck, and gazing up at the figure of S. Christopher, he uttered, hardly above a whisper, the word — ‘Magnificent!’ The gross soldier by Velasquez, at Berlin, is trampling upon a flag; this guide was earning a few coins; but the same ineradicable thing informed both — the dignity and breeding of Spain.

A Castilian Gentleman.

LEISURELY ran the train through the blue dusk of Spain. When we had passed the outpost Castilian town I dozed, wondering dreamily what would be my impression of the first Castilian gentleman I encountered. Suddenly the rhythmic rattle of the carriage was broken by a discord of shouts, snatches of song, and laughter—the voices of men, hundreds of them, young, leather-lunged. The express stopped. I put down the window to see alongside a stationary train packed with soldiers, each compartment overrunning with twice its rightful

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freight. The express moved slowly forward, and as it passed along the side of the troop train from each window a huddle of soldiers leaned out gesticulating, flinging undistinguishable sentences at us with incredible volubility. Pandemonium had burst out ; the blue, silent night behind, beyond, above ; and here, for a moment, those lighted carriages, those savage figures, and the babel of their silly chatter.

The express stopped again, immediately in front of the troop-train engine. Two great lamps shone out along the track, and in the glare stood three officers in earnest consultation. They were close together, a lonely group, their turned-up coat-collars almost hiding their faces—Rembrandtish figures, half-illuminated, half in gloom. I saw the gleam of scarlet cloth at their necks, and the rays from the engine lamps glinting on their swords.

Suddenly out from the darkness emerged a tattered figure. He threw his cloak, with an action of great dignity, across his shoulder, and striding towards me, raised his hat with a sweeping gesture and held

out his hand. I threw him a copper coin. Gravely he picked it up, honoured me with another sweeping gesture of his hat, said, 'God will repay your grace,' and stalked back into the night.

The Coward.

SUNSHINE from a still and cloudless sky flooded the bull-ring ; but there was riot in the thousands of faces that looked down upon the miserable bull. The Spaniards shouted, screamed, shook their fists, pelted him with oranges, and flung their cushions. For the bull was a coward. There was no doubt about it. One horseman after another had urged him to charge : he only bellowed and turned his tail to the lance. The men on foot had waved their cloaks, fantastic figures had poised their darts, and, since he would not attack them, had run forward and struck the beribboned darts into his hide : the bull would not play the game of being killed. He stood in the middle of the ring, tearing at the sand with his fore-hoofs, glaring about, a

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splendid-looking beast, either very wise—or very timid.

The rabble shouted commands to the box where the president of the bull-fight sat. He made a sign, and all the gaily-attired figures with their fluttering cloaks—pink, red, magenta—left the ring. The matador, who had been waiting at the barrier, stroking his scarlet lure, shrugged his shoulders and handed his sword to a servant. A marshal, clothed in black, ran, his cape fluttering, round the ring and whispered to the attendant whose privilege it is to handle the keys of the cells where the bulls wait in darkness for the fight. Then there was a pause—silence. A door opened ; a herd of tame cattle, unattended, bells jingling from their necks, trotted into the ring, surrounded the bull and galloped him out through the doors. He went quietly, encompassed by his kin and trusting them,—saved : because he was a coward.

Italy.

Genoa.

MODANE is the frontier town, and people have been known to stop at Turin ; but the gate of Italy is Genoa the Superb. Her chief street is narrow, and it has no side walks ; but every building in that street is a marble palace. The cool courtyards of the shining dwellings of her merchant princes are of marble, and beyond you will see orange gardens, and hear the water plashing over nymphs and tritons. Her university has a hanging garden ; the chapel of her poorhouse owns a 'Pieta' by Michael Angelo ; the picture galleries of her palaces contain Van Dyck's portraits of her ancient nobility.

Her hotels—? To one of them came, thrown for a night by some chance wave of travel on the jewelled bosom of La Superba, two elderly English ladies, shy, good, mittened, capped, short-skirted, wearing blouses, one magpie, the other sage-green, both easy-fitting. They were

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late for dinner. Faintly blushing, the two gentlewomen walked with precise boarding-school grace through the staring company, and, drawing together for reciprocal support, scanned with timid glances the Parisian menu that the best hotel in La Superba could devise. It dropped from their fingers, and the head waiter—he with the white waistcoat and the dark, upturning moustachios,—thinking they had made their selection, proffered them the wine card. With heads still closer together, they spelled out the wonderful names—Barolo, Chianti, Paradiso Blanche, Lachrima Christi, Asti Spumante—and looked up and around like hunted animals. Then some secret understanding passed between them, and the one with the sage-green blouse said quietly, ‘We should like you to bring us, if you please, two boiled eggs and some tea.’

Carrara.

THE train went slowly; for the rails in the Carrara marble-country have steep gradients and sharp curves. If some

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Japanese Jove could have cleft the Apuan Alps, which towered against the blue Italian sky to our left, and could have laid the portions side by side as one drops the halves of an apple upon a plate, hemispheres of marble would have been disclosed to mortal eyes. It was marble—marble, all the way for miles : nothing but marble, in trucks, in stacks, in studios by the wayside, in the ox-waggon that we saw lumbering down the white roads. The houses, large and small, were all of marble. Inexhaustible Carrara had given to Pisa, to Lucca, and to Pistoja, their great marble buildings, defying time.

Six hundred quarries are being worked up there in the Apuan Alps. When the train stopped at one of the little stations, I leaned out of the window and saw between two caravans of marble one of the painted carts that carry wine from the grape districts to the towns. It was laden with men, not with barrels ; and as the train slowed up one of them jumped down and ran towards the platform. He was burnt brown ; his clothes were white with dust ;

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his flannel shirt was open at the neck ; there was merriment in his blue eyes.

‘Could you oblige me with a pipeful of English tobacco ?’ he said, laughing. I gave him my pouch.

‘I’ve been up there eight months. O, for a sight of the Strand !’

‘Comfortable ?’ I asked.

He smiled. ‘I live in a cottage made of marble ; but the bed has no sheets, and —and what’s soap like ?’

The train moved on. ‘I say,’ he cried, running by the side, ‘who won the boat race ?’

For the life of me I could not remember.

‘Who ?’ he bawled.

‘Ox—— : No, Cambridge,’ I shouted.

‘Good old Cambridge !’ he screamed, waving his hat.

From every window of the train heads were thrust out. Grave Italian gentlemen saw a miner dancing a breakdown on the platform, and wondered.

Pisa.

It was very silent on the belfry stage of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, with the blue Italian sky above, those white immemorial buildings below, and, all round, the flat, fertile, sunlit plain of the Arno. The spirit of place had lulled me when, suddenly, these words, in that nasal, cousinly tongue from which there is no escape on this planet, fell on my ears: 'Say, Emmy, is that the ocean I see yonder?'

The spell was broken. I descended, and crossed the dazzling path that leads through long grass to the Baptistry door. On the threshold a man was dozing in the sun—an unshaven lanky Italian. I looked at him with as much curiosity as the heat permitted, wondering whether he was the person who had said to Mr. W. D. Howells, 'I am unique for making this echo.' He allowed me to pass unceremoniously. Entering the Baptistry, I seated myself on the lowest step of Guido Bigarelli's marble font, and, while reflecting that it was my duty to examine the reliefs

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on Niccolo Pisano's hexagonal pulpit, dozed. By and by—I cannot say whether the interval was half a minute or half an hour—the door opened, and the unshaven Italian slouched into the Baptistery, steadied himself on his long legs, and, lurching in my direction, said hoarsely, ‘Echo!’

He made strange noises in his throat, then struck certain notes in a voice that had once been baritone. The old walls caught them, prolonged them, spiritualised them, and would not let them go. I listened, marvelling. The melody was indescribably beautiful. It was the music of the Spheres brought down, for a little while, to earth.

When they ended, bringing a dull silence and emptiness, the unwashed provoker of them hiccupped, lurched again towards me, said, ‘Echo finished,’ and returned to his bed on the steps of the Baptistery. He was curled up there in the sun like a cat when I passed out on my way to the Campo Santo.

Rome.

ORANGES, shrivelled pears, and a few dried dates were the old woman's stock-in-trade. They were heaped upon a barrow placed against the shady wall of one of the patriarchal churches of Rome. Just before noon a small boy appeared to take charge of the shop while the old woman was at her devotions. I bought an orange for the good of the country and followed her into the church. She was kneeling on the flagstones.

Close to where she prayed men were repairing the floor of the church. A parallelogram had been railed off, and within were three workmen grouped round a brazier in which coal burned brightly in the gloom. I walked leisurely through the church. When I returned to the door I noticed that the old woman had just finished her confession. She rose from her knees, clambered with difficulty upon the exterior seat of the confessional, and kissed again and again the cheap framed lithograph of the Crucifixion that hung

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above. As she did so she wept. Then she took a rag of a handkerchief from her pocket and wiped the tears from off the lithograph. Then she kissed it again, and looked at it beseechingly, still crying.

While she was painfully shuffling down from the seat one of the workmen who were repairing the pavement called to me. 'Gentleman,' he said, 'would you like to buy a piece of the floor? Only one franc.' He held a fragment of tile between his fingers.

I followed the old woman into the street, the voice of that workman of United Italy pursuing me :—' 'Alf a franc, then. No? Very cheap.'

The Appian Way.

WHEN the Pope gave the custody of the catacombs of St. Calixtus to the monks of the Trappist monastery on the Appian Way, he, of course, absolved them, in their capacity as guides, from their rule of silence. Digging potatoes on their farm they answer your remarks by signs ;

shuffling ahead of you with a lighted taper through the catacombs, they talk freely.

My guide was a simple, kindly creature, in whose old brain some remnants of harmless vanity still lingered. He may have had more than one story to relate. I know not ; but I know that he told me one story twice, and he would have ambled it out a third time if I had tarried with him on that hillock overlooking the Appian Way. We had ascended from the catacombs, the tapers were quenched, I had bought his post-cards, when he told me the story a second time in honest, slowly enunciated English. ‘I have shown many distinguished people over the catacombs,’ he began, gently intoning the words. ‘The English are always given to me, because I am an Englishman !’

I expressed the surprise that he clearly expected.

‘I was born at Malta,’ came the answer, with a childlike smile. ‘Once I showed the Governor of Malta over the catacombs. Before he left I said to him, “I know you

quite well. You are the Governor of Malta." "How did you know that?" he asked. "Because I once worked in the dockyard at Malta," I said to him.'

The recital of this story gave the venerable Trappist brother so much pleasure that I wished I had listened to it a third time. This moment I hear his low voice telling it; hear, too, down there in the catacombs, that low voice dropping to a reverend whisper whenever he mentioned the sacred name.

Wild Flowers.

'God bless us! Another chap wantin' to get in now!' This remark, quite audible, was made by an elderly, clean-shaven John Bull to his wife when I stepped into the railway carriage at Rome. I remarked that there were five vacant seats, and that it was my intention to reach my destination by that train, and in that carriage. He made no answer, but puffed his cheeks rhythmically and noisily. A few minutes later four Italian youths entered the

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carriage. Ostentatiously I helped them with their hand-luggage. Before the train started three of them took off their coats and collars, slipped long linen blouses over their bodies, and tied white silk handkerchiefs round their necks. Clearly they were old travellers, accustomed to the heat of Italian railway journeys. The fourth had clad himself after English way. He retained his thick check-tweed coat and his high collar. When we passed the lovely vision of Spoleto, half of her in the sky and half clinging to the side of the hill, he said to John Bull, 'Dat is something grand.' He received a grunt for an answer. A little later we passed a stretch of downland all aglow with purple, as if nature had spread her new spring carpet there. Partly from curiosity, but also to show him that one person in the compartment appreciated his knowledge of the tongue that Shakespeare spoke, I turned to him and, waving to the riot of purple, said 'Can you tell me what they are?'

He beamed. 'Those,' he said, smiling,

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—‘those are just — savage flowers — clovers.’

It was only when we reached Assisi that I grasped his meaning.

Assisi.

WHEN you have seen the dark lower church and the bright upper church of Assisi, and gazed down the Umbrian valley, from the cloisters of the monastery, at the magnificent pilgrimage church built round the tiny oratory and cell of S. Francis, you pass out of the *Porte Nuova*, and walk down the hill to the little convent where S. Clare lived and died. It is very sunny, and the olive gardens are white with heat and dust; but inside the modest convent, unchanged since the day S. Clare left it, there are shade and deep coolness and repose.

A Franciscan brother showed me her chapel, refectory, dormitory, and the few poor things that she used in her lifetime, with her two or three yards of terrace garden from which she had a glimpse of sky and trees. He showed them to me;

but he did not describe them in his soft Italian speech. He was provided with a card on which some monkish scholar had written out, in English, descriptions of the rooms and the relics. He recited the words of the strange tongue, of which he was apparently quite ignorant, in a way that was inexpressibly inimical to the spirit of the place. The translator had not gone to classical models for his phraseology : no : neither in the description of Poor Clare's few things, nor in the account of that unparalleled incident when from an embrasure in the wall she routed the enemy, forced them to retire, and saved the convent from despoliation.

In the middle of the dormitory, the scene of the saint's triumph over the enemy, the Franciscan brother stood, cleared his throat, and announced in a martial voice : 'It was from this window that S. Clare frightened the Saracens by presenting the Sacraments. It was a novel sight, something out of the ordinary, to see them run.'

Below Perugia.

IT was her fate to see the world and its wonders; yet, I think, this maid would have been happier sewing in some quiet upper room of an English home. For three years, I learned, she had been attending on her mistress, who was travel-mad. They had been everywhere and seen everything—this indefatigable mistress and this weary maid. The maid's experiences of second-class railway carriages, side seats at hotel dinners, and belated service had been prodigious. What was she like? Just a plain-featured, neat, elderly woman, who had lost all personal desires, and lived only to anticipate the wants of an exacting mistress. I met them again and again on the beaten track in Italy, and once I saw the maid quite happy. The sight was invigorating.

I had left them at Assisi: the mistress copying an inscription from the Temple of Minerva; the maid holding the sunshade and reticule, yawning a little behind her cotton glove. I had made a wide detour to pay a supererogatory visit to a church, and not

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until sunset did I reach the Etruscan tomb at the foot of the hill on which Perugia stands—a tomb into which every loyal Baedekerite must descend.

It was dark and damp in the Etruscan tomb, where I found the custodian explaining the memorial to shadowy figures. One of his audience was the mistress, ardent as ever, her sunshade and reticule propped against Papa Volumnii. She was taking notes by the light of the guide's candle. I looked around for the maid, and discovered her sound asleep against a figure of the sun-god carved between dolphins. When the custodian noticed me he broke off his harangue to say, 'Does the strange gentleman understand that he pays one franc to enter this tomb?' I whispered my willingness, fearful of waking that Maid—happy for a little while.

Florence.

THE major was 'doing himself rather well.' During those radiant days in Florence his servant, who travelled with him, saw that

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each morning he had a suitable flannel suit, that the puggarees were nicely adjusted to his Panama or white sombrero hat, and that his well-preserved, rubicund, somewhat battered face was fittingly groomed. Not an easy task, for the major was no chicken. Sixty-seven, shall we say? 'The prime of life, sir, by Gad. Never felt fitter.'

Obviously he was not the man to call a cab from the street. No! At half-past ten a carriage-and-pair drew up at the hotel door, with a liveried footman on the box, and a valet-de-place waiting with bared head. The major's Italian (I betray no confidence) was not so fluent as D'Annunzio's, and he liked to hear what these 'foreign fellows' had to say about the pictures and monuments.

He and I met frequently. About the fourth morning he recognised me and shot out a brisk 'Good day! wonderful weather!' but on one occasion, in the Loggia dei Lanzi, he did not recognise me. I was standing in that place of memories watching the Florentines placing wreaths of flowers on Savonarola's grave

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and pinning sonnets to the ribbons. For some minutes I had been endeavouring to explain to a very small, very precocious and sceptical, American boy in a sailor suit why they were doing so, when the gun that is fired from the fort at noon suddenly boomed over Florence.

Who can forget that noon gun at Florence? The report crashes into the hot, still day, and at once the church bells are unloosed, and the world vibrates with melody. Just then, in this the most vivid moment of the Florentine day, with a rattle and a clatter the major's carriage drove up to the Loggia dei Lanzi. He leapt out with wonderful ease for a man of his years, and stood frowning, not ungraciously, at the monuments, undecided whether to examine first Benvenuto Cellini's 'Perseus' or Giovanni da Bologna's 'Rape of the Sabines.' The valet-de-place, who knew his business, stood at a respectful distance; the loafers raised themselves from the benches; Cook's courier, with an almost imperceptible movement, motioned his flock back; the man who sells ice-creams

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left his barrow. The major stood alone by the 'Rape of the Sabines,' with a silent, observant group about him. It was a fine sight; but the small American boy, to whom nothing was sacred, stepped forward, and, looking up at the six feet of white flannel, said:—

‘Hullo!’

The major made no answer, so the American boy continued the conversation.

‘How old are you?’ he asked cheerfully.

Siena.

SIENA is built upon three hills, and on the highest hill, just beneath the sun, stands her cathedral. Nothing happens in the cathedral square. It is too hot.

The façade of her cathedral, a miracle of red, black, and white marble and statuary, scintillates in the sunshine. The building is a hundred times too large for the Sienese worshippers to-day; yet it is only a bit of the cathedral—no more than the transept—that their ancestors meant to build. The plague of 1348 carried off

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80,000 citizens, and Siena has never recovered from the shock. Still, the Sienese are quite happy, quite content that the cathedral should sit dozing on her hill, with her pavement pictures covered by worm-eaten boards.

I spent a morning in the cathedral square curious to see if anything could happen there. We sat, five citizens and myself, on the long stone bench that faces the cathedral. I stared up at the façade. My companions did likewise. They had gazed at it a thousand times ; but what else could they do in that heat ? A man strolled out of the municipal building at the back and watered a few yards of the square. Then he sat down and examined the place he had watered. Presently he rose, swept some minute particles of dust into a heap, and with a happy sigh again seated himself. We all looked at the small mound he had collected. Half an hour later he rose, shovelled the dust into a pail, and again seated himself. Once more we stared at the cathedral. I noticed that it had been restored ; but the

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sun was so glaring that I could not distinguish details. A dog emerged from a doorway, blinked, tried to catch a fly, yawned, and retired into the passage.

'He doesn't like the heat,' I reflected ; but it was too hot to make the remark aloud.

We all stared at the passage until some one shut the door. Then we looked up again at the cathedral, which was now completely flooded with sunlight. We stared and nodded.

Nothing else happened. Nothing could happen on that sun-scorched hill in front of Siena Cathedral on a June day. President Roosevelt would never have written *The Strenuous Life* if he had been a Sieneese.

Lucca.

LUCCA is not lively. Historians call her antiquated ; but if Lucca is not so modern as Margate, she is unwearying in martial ardour and veneration for her soldiers who have died for Italy. I encountered her on the day of commemoration, and met

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'the procession' marching through the town, doubling, retracing its steps, swinging round dark by-ways. I got entangled in it three times, and missed my train for Bologna.

First came the band playing that march of death and great deeds wherein, at intervals, the brass ceases for the drums to speak alone in four funereal beats; then the melody cries out again at the point where it paused. Behind the band marched the soldiers with flags flying, and following them came the veterans, ex-soldiers in citizen broadcloth, staggering beneath enormous banners, inscribed with the names of battles; then the orphans of the military school; then small irreverent boys; then my cab.

They visited the churches, and placed enormous wreaths on flamboyant tombs. That morning was consecrated to the honouring of those who had died for Italy—the new Italy, the United. And throughout the town of Lucca,—in churches, in quiet corners, on the façades of houses, in villages and hamlets stretched out on the

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hillsides,—were those things that the great craftsman of the early Renaissance, who had lived for Italy, had wrought, making her wonderful among the nations ; but it is for Garibaldi that Lucca throws caps into the air to-day, not for Niccolo Pisano, or for Matteo Civitali. The monuments to Garibaldi and to the ‘Champions of Italian Liberty’ were strewn with wreaths ; but not one flower had been offered to the lonely statue of Matteo Civitali.

Rain, strident and persistent, broke up the procession. I reached the station, and waited there with three bedraggled veterans, who were returning to their villages. A porter removed one of the flaming banners to make room for my hold-all.

He sneezed as he did so, and remarked with conviction, ‘Brutto tempo !’

‘Orrido !’ I answered, and was so pleased to think I was beginning to understand the Italian language that I nearly gave him a shilling.

Bologna.

THE seventeenth-century eclectics sprawl over the walls of the picture gallery of Bologna. Incurious travellers avoid these examples of Italy's decline ; but I patiently explored the inventions of the Caracci and Guido Reni until their facile materialism became intolerable. Seeking for an antidote, I remembered the pilgrimage church of the Madonna di San Luca, on a hill three miles to the south-west of Bologna. On the way thither, at any rate, was nature, and perhaps, I reflected, the custodian might be induced to show me the picture of the Virgin (see handbooks) 'ascribed to S. Luke,' which was brought from Constantinople in 1160. From the Caracci to S. Luke—the attempt was worth making.

Having lost my way on the town side of the Ponte Saragozza, I paused in the doorway of a baker's shop to make inquiry. There and then one of those curious experiences that happen once only in a lifetime befell me. Suddenly, while I was listening to the baker's instructions, some-

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thing flopped upon my head, knocking off my hat, and at the same time I heard the jingle of a coin on the pavement. Looking up, I saw a basket dangling from a cord ; and at the other end of the cord, leaning out of the first-floor window, the angry face of an old wrinkled woman, who was shaking a bare arm at me. While I was considering the situation the baker picked up the coin from the gutter, pocketed it, and placed a loaf of bread in the basket. The old woman eagerly drew it up, and disappeared, having successfully accomplished her shopping.

I rescued my hat, and passed on my way through this country of wonders to seek the picture painted by S. Luke.

Ravenna.

HALF-WAY between Ravenna and that pine forest where Dante brooded his cantos and Byron galloped his horses, stands the loneliest church in Italy. It can remember the sixth century. On the vast marsh that surrounds Sant. Apollinare in Classe

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the galleys of the Cæsars once sailed ; but the sea retired centuries ago, leaving ponds and pools where malaria and serpents lurk, and strange flaming flowers grow. No one who is wise lives on that marsh. Each night the harvesters, and others who toil there by day, hasten into Ravenna before the vapour rises.

I met them coming in as I drove across the plain to the church that Augustus built to serve the city of Classis by the Lagoon. Portus Classis has gone ; the church remains. Gaunt and bare, defying time, it lumbers out of the plain between the pinewood by the Adriatic and Ravenna—a shell ; but a shell that speaks. In the middle of the worn floor stands an ancient altar ; in the aisles are eight sarcophagi, in which, long before the Norman Conquest, the bodies of eight archbishops were laid ; mosaics, twelve hundred years old, glitter on the Rood arch above the tribunal. Their freshness startles.

The solitary traveller sees the twelve apostles, symbolised as sheep, hastening to Christ from the towns of Jerusalem and

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Bethlehem. Christ waits in the middle of the arch. On either side six sheep follow one another, in single file, lifting their heads to Him. No more. The simple story! The sheep who seek the shepherd. The shepherd who loves the sheep. For twelve hundred years, through the multitudinous vagaries of the churches, has this lesson stood there asking man to learn it.

I left the church accompanied in spirit by that artist of the childhood of religion who had the wisdom of a child. Outside all was in harmony with the simple faith of the seventh century—the limitless plain, the great sky, the sun, round and red, just above the horizon, and a spot yonder on the white road that looked like a hay-waggon drawn by mild-eyed oxen. It was not a hay-waggon. It advanced too quickly.

The woman of the twentieth century jumped lightly from the motor-car, shook the dust from her cloak, dabbed at her headgear, and said: 'See? There now! I only let my maid rough my hair. What there is of it is all my own! I don't wear

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those things inside that so many women do.'

And the twentieth-century man said wearily, 'I see.'

Parma.

THERE was excitement in the cathedral of Parma.

Unusual, I admit ; for, the thunder of history being silenced, Parma is very well-behaved. It is known merely as the city where Corregio lived a quiet and modest life, painted lavishly, and in such a way that a word has had to be coined to describe his style—'corregiosity.'

Sacristans hover about the dim cathedral at Parma with lanterns. When they espy a stranger, one of them culls him, taps his lantern, points upwards to what is left of Corregio's 'Assumption' in the dome, and mimics the 'action of ascending steps. If the stranger accepts the invitation he follows the gleam of his guide's candle, and reaches the dome, panting like a dog that has just won the Waterloo Cup.

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Four small square iron doors are opened in turn, through which he timidly peeps, trying to believe that he is enjoying his debauch of Corregio and vertigo.

No one ascends the dome a second time ; but I did return to the cathedral in the afternoon to see if I could not persuade myself that Corregio's 'Assumption' was something more than accomplished scene-painting. In thus returning I shared the excitement. The sacristans were no longer tapping their lanterns. Their necks, like the necks of the strangers, were crooked back so that their eyes might stare up into the dome, where a swallow was flying round and round Corregio's peeling paintings. Although the door of the cathedral was wide open, the bird did not attempt to escape into the air. Sometimes he stopped abruptly in his wild flight and pecked at one of Corregio's figures ; then, with increased ardour, he continued his gyrations round the dome. A child would have guessed that this intelligent swallow was disturbed, irritated, angry.

Intelligent ? Who dare affirm that so

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ubiquitous a traveller as the swallow does not know good painting from bad?

I said as much to the nearest sacristan.

He came back to earth, tapped his lantern, brought his knees in quick succession towards his chin, and smiled his hoary invitation.

Milan.

MILAN is Leonardo da Vinci's city : it is also the city of hurry which the Edison Company's tramway system aids and abets. Leonardo's statue, brooding with bent head as in life, stands high above the turmoil ; round it, over sixty miles of lines, the electric cars rush. When Leonardo died in 1519 one of the compartments of his vast brain had been stirring the deeps of science : again and again he forsook painting to study geometry, the flights of birds, and the ways of rivers. Nearly four hundred years later Edison constructed the tramway system of Leonardo's city. From Leonardo to Edison ! The scientific curiosity of their minds runs together, and bridges the centuries.

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One of the Edison cars hustled me, in the company of several citizens whose eyes were alert with business schemes, to the refectory of the abbey church where Leonardo's 'Last Supper,' that lovely and pathetic wreck, is gradually fading from the wall oozing with mineral salts. The car dropped me at the door of the refectory ; but the Milan cars do not dally for customers at Santa Maria as do the drivers of Strand omnibuses when the theatres are closing. For Milan is a pushful city, always in a hurry. There is no one idle there.

I sat at a café table in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele wondering whether anybody in this thriving city led a quiet life. Was there one who walked to his destination as Leonardo walked to the refectory of the abbey church, sometimes to give one brushmark only to his 'Last Supper' ? Was there one in Milan to whom time was of no account ?

Yes ! He approached—a man very old, very disreputable, very indifferent to his environment. He was one of those wrecks who earn a living by collecting the ends of

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cigarettes and cigars that smokers have tossed away. He shuffled along, inserting his crooked stick between the legs of the tables and beneath the chairs, never looking up, intent only on gathering in his miserable harvest, secreting in his satchel with shaking hands the chewed bits of bad tobacco.

I dropped a cigarette upon the floor. Slowly his crooked stick gathered it in. I dropped another and another. I dropped the contents of an entire packet. His bleared eyes showed no amazement. Life had no surprises left for him; and when the manna ceased, he waited for five minutes, his eyes fixed on the ground, then slowly slouched on.

The cigarettes (Italian make) were not wasted. I had found the one man in Milan who was not in a hurry.

Verona.

THE custodian of the Tombs of the Scaligers, like other mortals, must dine. The great man was dining (a mendicant informed me) when I reached the tiny

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burial ground by the church of Santa Maria Antica, which contains the finest Gothic monuments that the fourteenth century produced. I waited by the turnstile, in pattern similar to the one which admits to the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park, and gazed up above the portal of the church at the monument of Con Grande della Scala, the lion of the family. This great lord of Verona, who climbed so high, lies as if asleep, his sword by his side, his arms crossed. Above, on the crest of the monument, he appears again, eternally riding forth to battle on his charger, his helmet flung back on his shoulders, his sword unsheathed, and on his face a smile as of one who has faced death so often that the real thing has no terror.

Within the railing of the burial ground stood the other monuments of the Scaligers. It was good to be alone with these tremendous monuments of antiquity. Was I alone? Hardly. On the other side of the wrought-iron railings I saw the faces of two young Japanese gentlemen. Each was dressed in quiet grey; each was

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carrying an overcoat and an umbrella ; their eyes roved from the towering monument of Mastino della Scala to that of Consignorio della Scala, and then to the flying helm of Con Grande. They seemed to be seeking something, as children search for white heather ; but the thing they were seeking is as common on the tombs of the Scaligers as lamp-posts in a street—the badge of the family, 'a ladder.

That ladder is everywhere—woven into the railings, on the breasts of the warriors, carved on the stone sarcophagi, emblazoned on the shields that the mastiffs guard beneath the laughing face of Con Grande.

I saluted the beaming faces of our allies. My smile died away, for no Englishman should smile when he is kept waiting. Their smiles, which had rippled over their faces when they began to count the ladders, remained. It was what these gentle-looking Japanese gentlemen had in common with Con Grande—a smile and—shall I say ? the ladder.

Padua.

DANTE, an exile at Padua in 1306, watched Giotto, it is said, painting the frescoes in the chapel of Madonna dell' Arena. Remembering this, I expected to find a small crowd waiting admission to the chapel in the Roman amphitheatre, eager to see Giotto's amazing frescoes.

There was no crowd outside the gate. Alone I rang the bell; alone I passed through the fragrant garden, which has blossomed from the Roman arena; and alone I studied the frescoes, four rows of them winding round the walls, illustrating the lives of Mary and Christ. The custodian seated himself on a chair in the doorway just out of the sunshine, and read the Paduan news from a small rustling print. He was quite indifferent to Giotto and Dante, and to my enthusiasm; but when I discovered that in the upright lances and torches carried by the soldiers in his fresco of the 'Kiss of Judas' Giotto had anticipated Velasquez' lances in 'The Surrender of Breda,' I might, I think, have

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spoken to him, or at any rate have bought a photograph of the 'Kiss of Judas'; but turning to the door with that intention, I found that the custodian had left his paper, and had moved away to watch a crowd that had collected outside the arena railings. I remained alone with Giotto, realising once more, with amazement, what a pioneer this shepherd boy of fourteenth-century Italy had been.

When I left the chapel the crowd was still gathered outside the arena railings. I found that it was caused by an itinerant vendor of ice-creams. He, in the ice-cream industry, was as stalwart a pioneer as Giotto in painting. Instead of giving his customers the delicacy in a glass without a spoon, the immemorial method of Saffron-hill, he sandwiched each portion of ice cream between two delicate circles of sweet biscuit, which his customers carried away with them and devoured at leisure.

He offered a novelty and drew a crowd. Six hundred years before Giotto had offered a novelty and had drawn a crowd.

The face of the custodian plainly said,

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'N'oubliez-pas le Gardien, S.v.p.' ; but I did not pass an ice-cream to him through the railing. He did not seem quite loyal to the other pioneer.

Venice.

A BRIDGE of boats had been thrown across the Grand Canal during the night, and by dawn the devout were hastening across to make their devotions at Santa Maria della Salute. The procession passed over later ; but all day the patter of the feet of the religious over the bridge continued, and at sunset, when I set forth in my gondola for the railway station, the Venetians were still tripping over the bridge to honour the saint. That is Italy : the traffic of the main thoroughfare impeded that a saint may be worshipped.

My gondolier waited his turn to pass through the arch of the bridge. While he waited it was not Venice at sunset—incomparable sight !—that possessed me. By some subjective freak of memory I thought of darkness with one candle flickering in the

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gloom—the damp, horrid darkness that had overwhelmed me in the church of the Frari on the afternoon of yesterday. A thunder-storm had hovered over Venice, and before the clouds broke the daylight went. In that funereal hour I stumbled over the doorstep of the Frari into the black church, where a few dim figures wandered amid scaffold poles and spades and other signs of restoration. I looked at the altar-piece that was supposed to be Titian's 'Madonna di Casa Pesaro' soaring through colour ; it was the hue of a mud-bank. Then the rain descended, and I wandered disconsolately through the church until it should cease.

The sacristy was like a mason's yard. It was under repair, and all the pictures had been removed to the choir ; but the two English gentlewomen, indefatigable students of art, probably high-school mistresses, had not realised that. Storm, rain, damp, and darkness were inoperative against their enthusiasm. They had borrowed a candle from the sacristan. One of them, crouched on the floor, held it against the tiny print

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of her guide-book, reading aloud in a reverent voice, 'Madonna enthroned with saints and angelic musicians, by Giovanni Bellini, in a beautiful Renaissance frame,' etc.; the other patiently searched the walls. I hesitated to tell them that the Bellini had been removed. The picture they made was so complete: two ardent Englishwomen searching with a lighted candle in a dark Venetian church for a Madonna by Giovanni Bellini that was not there.

* * * * *

My gondolier's turn came. He made a dart for the arch of the bridge and swept me on to the railway station. I had entered Italy through Genoa, her stainless marble palaces soaring proudly into the sky. I left her by Venice, her stained marble palaces shimmering sadly down into the water. I had seen the fireflies all along the Umbrian valley, that candle flickering in the dark church of the Frari, and Mantegna's last picture, on which he had inscribed, 'Nothing but the Divine endures; the rest is smoke.'

The vision was complete.

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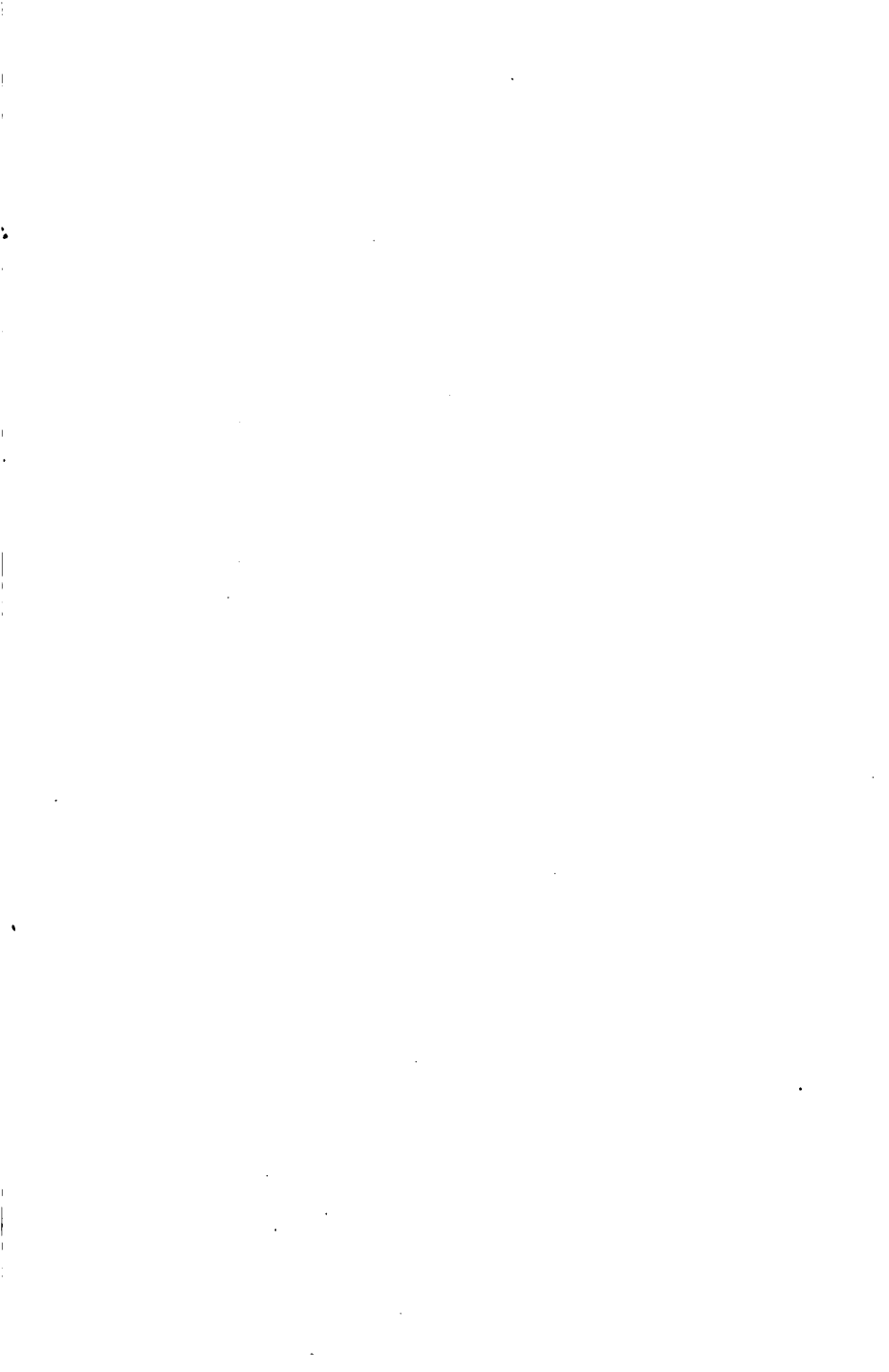
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